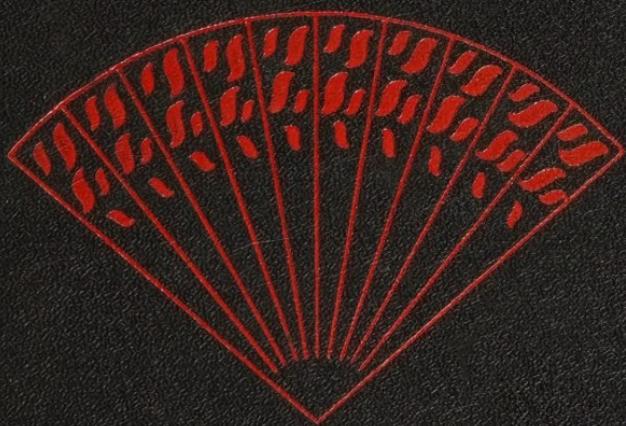


THE  
**SANDALWOOD FAN**

**THOMAS MC MORROW**



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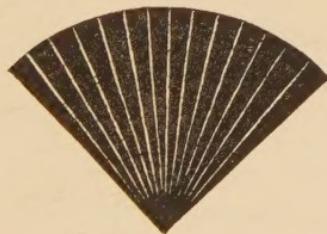
THE  
SANDALWOOD FAN



# THE SANDALWOOD FAN

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By  
Thomas McMorrow



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Publishers ~ New York

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THE SANDALWOOD FAN

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# THE SANDALWOOD FAN

## CHAPTER I

T was about nine o'clock in the evening of May 21, 1920, when Dick Phillipse drove his car across the Queensboro bridge on his way to visit Garry Duane. The day was Friday, and the townward traffic was not heavy; he made fair time on the Queens County Boulevard into Jamaica and then opened up to a steady thirty-five miles on the Merrick Road.

A high-handed chap, he reflected with a trace of irritation. In view of his having returned from Europe only that afternoon, Garry could have named another week-end, should not have pledged him to come out that very evening. He had not seen Garry in ten years, nor, until the telephone call, had he exchanged a line or word with him; another few days would not have mattered. Of course he would like to see him again. Garry had said to him once, "Dick, you're the

only man I know that I can just sit around with."

He was at once eager and rebellious, like any man upon whom a pleasure is forced. Ten years was a long time. To renew an acquaintance after ten years is an experience; to revive a friendship is an adventure. Embarking on it, Dick's irritation, which he would not restrain where Garry Duane was concerned, was suffused with gayety. He would see his friend again, and he would see himself. For him, ten years was to be but a moment. He had last seen Garry at a class dinner where there had been hilarious drinking; he felt now a sense of astonishment, as though he had just waked and had recalled a vivid dream wherein he had been a sober and oldish machinery manufacturer, a staid bachelor chap who would soon be forty.

Garry's place was out between Blue Point and Bayport, and a good two hours from the bridge—confound his crust to drag a man away out there on a moment's notice. Nobody but Garry Duane would have done it, or could.

During the elapsed ten years, Dick had passed the entrance to Garry's place a full dozen times, but always while going somewhere in a hurry and always with the resolve to stop in another time. He would know it now by the black masses of the spruces—blue and gray and green in sun-

light and with the pure flash of marble in the slate-colored shadows. He had never passed that imposing entrance without saying to himself, with gladness and a dash of indignation, that gambling certainly paid. That's what the chap was—a common gambler—real estate, the stock market, yes, and the race track and poker table; he could call himself a promoter.

Ah, here was the place now, with a drive in like a wolf's throat, and five hundred feet long. Where was the house—those lights, glinting through evergreens? They had swallowed the house; when Dick had last been there, those evergreens were due to be headed back, and overdue; now they were dense and high—as high as the chimney pots. They were the fringe of green that had been planted about the base of the walls as a mere ornament and accessory once upon a time, and now they had swallowed the house—a symbol of the distorted values in Garry's life. Well, a symbol, perhaps, but without a moral or warning, if to live in a place like this was the appointed end of a gay dog.

Dick tooted his horn beside the stone steps to the brick terrace. There was too much noise in the house for his signal to be heard. He left his car under the porte-cochère and went up the steps and rang the bell.

Here was not the black house of a workaday suburbanite; light peeped from all the windows. Voices clattered in conflict; a single male voice was bellowing dominantly, and there were brassy snatches of music. Garry was evidently having a party. The same old Garry Duane. How did he stand it, how had he stood it for all those years? He had always been a fellow to drink and carry on. Well, Dick was sure of his welcome—hearty if boozy. Garry would seize him and haul him in among a merry and tipsy company, which would become for a moment exaggeratedly grave and formal; Garry would announce that this Dick Phillipse was an incomparable fellow, a mechanical genius, and his nearest and dearest friend; and Garry would mean every word of it. To be a friend of Garry Duane was to be an incomparable fellow. Dick would enjoy the manhandling and the genial extravagance; it had been a dark and chilly drive.

No one came to the door. Dick found it unlocked, opened it and stepped on the deep-piled Turkish rug in the foyer. He was greeted by his own reflection in a tall mirror over a console table. He advanced into the vast living room, smiling, braced to endure and enjoy the hospitable onset.

As he crossed the threshold and surveyed the

luxurious prospect of grouped easy-chairs, grand piano, ranked bookshelves at the farther end, silver, bottles and glasses, there was a perfect roar of voices, a frenzied and joyous tumult. Dominating the noise, which came from a loud-speaker on the chimney breast over the fireplace, were the staccato shouts of the radio announcer: "A right—another right—a right and left—Durkin is down! They're counting—one, two, three—" Nobody was in the room. Dick was amused.

He went to a table and helped himself to a cigarette and strolled about the room, stopping under paintings for a judicial view, caressing his chill hands, letting the news of the latest battle of the century go in one ear and out the other. He balanced himself on the threshold of the dining room and looked in; he lounged to the billiard-room entrance and looked in there. He saw no one, but was thoroughly at home, being in Garry's house.

They are in the pantry, no doubt, he said to himself—somewhere in the service quarter. The help have been sent to bed or to the moving pictures, so that the company may have the house to themselves. Perhaps the party is in an advanced stage; the weaker members have succumbed to conscience or drink and have gone dis-

creetly or have been borne off like trophies. An elimination contest is going on; Garry and three or four good fellows of iron heads are making a sporting finish with straight brandy.

The oak-paneled dining room was white with light; he walked through it and into the gleaming pantry, and met no one. No one was in the kitchen or in the help's sitting room behind it. The illumination and the bellowing from the radio made the atmosphere easy and informal, and Garry's house had always been go-as-you-please; Dick climbed the rear stairs, calling cordially as he went, "Hello—hello, in the house!"

He was in a dark upper hall and was occupying himself with the whimsical but not amusing thought that perhaps he was making a mistake and this was no longer Garry's house, when a female voice called, "In a moment."

He heard an invisible door open. The girl's voice said cheerily, "Good evening. Please come here. I can't see."

Dick advanced haltingly in the darkness. "I am Richard Phillipse, madam. I'm trying to find somebody to tell that I'm here. Perhaps you'll take this important announcement?"

"Very well, you're here," said the girl laughingly. "Just where are you here, Mr. Phillipse?"

Dick's groping fingers encountered an extended hand. He shook hands.

"I am Nell Duane, Garry's little sister," said the invisible girl. "Hello, Dick Phillipse. Garry has talked so much of you. I know all about you and still I like you. Have you done anything very wonderful lately to add to the picture?"

"I'd rather have a picture of my own to dwell on," said Dick, still holding her slim hand—"a picture of the little sister. From your voice, I know that you are very beautiful, with large and starry eyes—"

"Now I know the lights are off," exclaimed the girl merrily. Dick heard the click of a push button. The hall was flooded with light.

"And with large and starry eyes, by George!" said Dick, bowing to the pretty, chestnut-haired girl who stood before him in a *robe-de-chambre*.

The pupils of her large gray eyes were much dilated; the dilation did not subside under the sudden glare. He leaned toward her and looked in her eyes with intentness.

"I can't see," she said, answering his unspoken thought. "That shows you what a selfish beast I am—I keep forgetting that most people are helpless in the dark. Dick, we love to have you here. You've been abroad, haven't you? Garry's been calling you up, and he went to see you in

New York. He's home, I think. I'll stop that infernal noise and look about for him. We must be careful not to startle him or he'll bite," she said, confidently leading the way down the main staircase. "He's been a fierce old bear lately. I can't imagine what's worrying him so, Dick; maybe he'll tell you."

They had reached the foyer. Through an uncurtained French door in the farther side of the living room, Dick saw the shadowy figure of a man crossing a side porch and descending.

"Are you and Garry alone in the house?"

"Yes—why? Did you hear someone? I'm sure I did. Someone went through the solarium and out into the garden. It couldn't be Garry. I was upstairs in bed reading"—Dick glanced at her slender fingers—"and I heard the crowd going out. Flo—that's the new Mrs. Duane, Dick—was entertaining friends." She shut off the radio. "That couldn't have been Garry. And the chauffeur has taken the maids to Patchogue to the theater. Oh, Dick, you must see the fan Garry bought for you. He tells me you collect fans." She walked to a secretary. Dick noticed that the drawer beneath the writing shelf had been pulled halfway out. She felt in the drawer. "Garry has it in his study."

She was returning to him and chatting easily

when she halted suddenly. Her mouth opened and her head turned aside. Dick listened, too; he heard nothing but the musical chiming of a clock striking the midnight hour. He saw fear in her bright face.

"What's the matter, Miss Duane?"

"Dick, go up to the study. But wait!" She ran to a bookcase, stretched up to its top and felt about. "It's gone," she said; and now her fear was controlling. "The pistol. I heard someone running just now. Garry!"

She cried her brother's name aloud in an agony of dread, turned and darted from the room. Dick overtook her on the rear stairs. He caught her wrist and compelled her to let him pass her.

"I'll go first, if anything is wrong," he said imperatively. She remained where he had halted her. He bolted up the stairs and into the study. "Hello, Garry!" he shouted with nervous intensity, catching an ominous glimpse of his old friend.

Garry Duane was sitting in a chair at his desk. It was Garry—a thin and gray Garry, prematurely aged. He was six years older than Dick, and had always seemed old to him, but there was nothing fanciful about it now.

The marks of hard living were plain in his face; he was given the bill at last, poor chap, thought Dick, lifting the dead man's head. It

was all over. The reveler's glass was turned down; his song was sung. How clever he had been, how loyal in friendship, how he had loved life. He was dead. His poor forehead was powder blackened. There was the pistol on the floor, warm. The hand from which it had slipped was drooping to it now, telling the ghastly story in a revealing gesture; Garry's poor right hand was stretched toward the evily shining thing as if he would seize it again, unregretting.

It might have been, if Dick had come sooner, had come at once, had not delayed about his own trifling affairs while his friend was bowing under mortal tempting here—and Dick could have come hours sooner—he would have found his friend alive who now was dead.

Slow and unwilling steps sounded on the stairs. He went out, shut the door behind him and said commandingly: "Miss Duane—Nell. We're going right downstairs and wait for your sister-in-law. Do you know where we can get her? Come now, Nell."

She flung off his arm with frenzied strength and raced upward, crying her brother's name.

## CHAPTER II

OU heard the clock strike?" asked the tall thin man with the brooding manner and the muted voice who had been introduced to Dick as Doctor Wessel.

"Just before Miss Duane became alarmed."

"Typical," murmured Doctor Wessel.

"Typical of what?"

"Alcoholics. They'll set a precise time and then they'll drink themselves full of courage. When the time comes, they'll do it; the resolution carries over and the drinking doesn't change it. Alcohol doesn't affect them as it would you or me; it doesn't exhilarate them—make them happy. It just numbs their feeling of depression, so that they can endure to live. But that's when they kill themselves. It takes a bit of nerve, and they have no nerve or initiative ordinarily."

"Nell says Garry wasn't drinking."

"She couldn't watch him. I've had him in my sanitarium down the road here, and I could take care of him there, but he couldn't be watched in

his own house. He promised her he wouldn't drink, but an alcoholic thinks he must drink. It is difficult to work on them through the mind, because their minds are abnormal. If Nell begged him not to drink, he'd promise, to please her, and then he'd get drunk to please himself."

"Good Lord, was Garry like that?"

"Oh, yes. You knew him when he was a social drinker. Most drinking of alcohol is social drinking, and most drinkers never leave that stage, but there's a percentage that goes on to dipsomania. People of bad ancestry; people of such strong stomachs that they don't feel poisoned on the morning after, and therefore don't learn to fear alcohol. Of late, Garry would go systematically to work and drink himself into my place down the road. I have the very best people there; you'd be shocked to know how many people love a long and solitary souse, and who they are. The trouble with alcohol is that it affects the mind. The social drinker can take it and can leave it alone, but if he drinks long enough he won't want to leave it alone."

"You'd call Garry a dipsomaniac?"

"Perhaps worse. His mind was affected."

"He could attend to his affairs, couldn't he?"

"Oh, yes, and be very shrewd about them, but

he had developed delusions. He had an accident in his car when the steering knuckle broke, and he told me in confidence that he believed the car had been tampered with. There you have the typical delusion of persecution, originating in a depression. Another time he borrowed from me a work on toxicology and I dug out of him the notion that his food was poisoned."

"These were delusions, you say."

"Absolutely. A hallucination of taste."

"Then the poor fellow's case was hopeless anyway?"

Doctor Wessel lifted his hands high in an exaggerated gesture.

"I don't know. We can't affect to speak with certainty about the individual. We can take any thousand men and can foretell percentages, but we can't tell which are the individuals who will bog down into chronic alcoholism and which are they who will still be drinking their daily quarts of whisky at the age of eighty-five. We can't know the personal idiosyncrasy."

"But you do know that Garry had this terrible craving."

"If I said so, let me moderate it. I'm a psychiatrist; you'll pardon me, then, if I regard alcoholism as a mental disease, originating in a depression. You've heard of people getting drunk

to forget their troubles; there's the idea. Garry had some secret trouble. He had this craving for alcohol, as the natural result of his heavy social drinking, but I think that I broke him of that craving more than once. Rather, I stilled it in him. It was there, submerged, and could be brought up again, but he could live without alcohol. He went back to drinking every time. Something was driving him, and it wasn't a physical craving for alcohol. It was mental."

"Business worries?"

Doctor Wessel flung his arm wide in a dismissing gesture. "He was a born gambler. He had a mystic faith in his ability to conjure up money whenever he needed it. It was something deep down. I've talked to him by the hour, by the day, trying to get him to open up, but he wouldn't do it. I could taper him off and dry him out, but I wanted to bring up into daylight the thing that was pushing him always toward alcohol—the hidden thing that bred his delusions."

Doctor Wessel lifted an invisible something from the floor and held it in cramped fingers before Dick's eyes.

"To cure him, you mean."

"Well, we don't cure people. They cure themselves by our suggestion. We talk to them and draw them out and find the maladjustment.

However, the point I make is that you want to efface from your mind—efface from your mind! —the notion, if you have it, that Garry did not make away with himself. He did. It was typical."

"Oh, I don't doubt it; though Nell says she heard someone running, and there was that man I saw on the porch who is unaccounted for."

"Nell's hearing is very acute—compensation, you know." Doctor Wessel leaned forward confidentially and beamed into Dick's face. "Isn't she interesting?"

"Why, I find her so."

"A most interesting case."

"A case?"

"Certainly, Mr. Phillipse. That girl's trouble is psychic. To give you the idea, I'll say that she can see as well as you can, and that she doesn't know it."

"There's nothing like leather, is there, doctor?" said Dick eyeing the psychiatrist composedly. He was losing faith in Doctor Wessel.

They were sitting on the side porch, facing the gardens.

"Mr. Phillipse," said a contralto voice behind them.

"Yes, Mrs. Duane," said Dick, rising and turning to the woman who had come from the house.

The stress of the week that had passed since her husband's death had marred Mrs. Florence Duane's natural comeliness. Her heavy and large-featured face was lined, and there were violet smears under her heavy eyes. She was a robust woman of middle height; her looks, at best, were striking rather than appealing, and required color and expression to lend to them feminine charm. Her obvious strength and vitality daunted most men; those who were drawn to her found her irresistible. Garry Duane had married her two years before, almost on the spur of the moment; he had met her at a costume ball, where, in piled and powdered hair and expanses of brocade, she had been magnificent.

"The lawyer is coming from Patchogue with the will," she said. "Would you mind going up to the study and looking around for the combination of the safe? The lawyer asks for it. I'd do it, but I—simply can't."

Dick and Doctor Wessel went upstairs together.

"There's one thoroughly normal and competent person, doctor," said Dick.

"Mrs. Duane? Oh, no," said the psychiatrist promptly. "She's neurotic—egocentric—oh, very much. You heard her say that she wishes to come up here, but can't? That's a typical lack

of insight. The fact is that she can't come here because she doesn't want to. She can't do anything she doesn't want to. She is at the mercy of her impulses."

"Temperamental, eh?" Dick was making conversation as he looked through the drawers of the desk. It was indeed a mad world, to listen to the psychiatrist.

"A layman's word for 'hysterical.' The fact that so-called temperamental people act eccentrically, doing just as they please, shows they lack insight. They belong in a sanitarium. The chief difference between people in sanitariums and people outside is that the people outside have insight. They're in a state of unstable equilibrium, too, Mr. Phillipse, but they don't lose their balance—don't lose their heads, as you say. When we've succeeded in giving a patient insight, he's about ready to resume his place in society."

The rug had been removed, but the room had not been otherwise ordered. The flat-top desk of golden oak was still littered with the papers that had been before Garry Duane that night. Dick ran through them now, selecting unpaid or receipted bills, returning to place the letters and other writings of a purely personal nature. At the request of the women, he had stayed on after the funeral.

"Nothing here," he announced. "There may be a notebook somewhere, though I couldn't find it yesterday."

"He may have put down the combination in a cipher of his own, for safety," suggested Wessel, turning over the rejected papers. "It is odd but true that few people, even suicides, have the common sense to prepare for sudden death. Hello, what's this about?"

He was holding a sheet of foolscap upon which several lines had been printed by hand in very small characters. Dick scrutinized it again:

Let the wealthy and great roll in splendor and state;  
I envy them not, I declare it. I eat my own lamb,  
My own chicken and ham, I shear my own fleece and  
I wear it.

I have lawns, I have bowers, I have trees, I have  
flowers,

The lark is my morning alarmer. So, my jolly boys,  
now,

Here's God speed the plow. Success and long life  
to the farmer.

A serrated line, like the outline of a fan, was arched over the verse.

"I've seen it before," said Dick, dropping the sheet on the desk. "It's printed on several pieces of English pottery downstairs, so it is hardly original with Garry. Just an idle scribbling."

"See the characteristic irregularity in the spacing of the words," said Doctor Wessel; but Dick had lost his interest in the mystery of mentality. He had been inclined to like and trust Doctor Wessel, but the fellow had developed altogether too much insight.

They returned to the main floor and met Counselor Cadmus Suydam, of Patchogue, an unpretentious and reliable-looking chap, who, like Dick, was just on the sunny side of middle age. Suydam introduced Dick to a representative of the State Transfer Tax Department who had come with him. A man with a small black bag open beside him was kneeling before the large safe that was built into the wall beneath a bookcase.

"Shall we read the will?" asked Suydam, drawing a document from a brief case. He nodded smilingly at Dick, who was watching the doorway for the entrance of Nell Duane, and said: "We keep to the old ways in the country, Mr. Phillipse. I think you'll find us, however, reasonably competent. I drew this will, and it was executed only two weeks ago by Mr. Duane. 'In the Name of God, Amen.'" He stopped reading and looked over his spectacles at the man before the safe. "Are you making progress? The transfer tax people are going to seal that box until another time, if we can't open it to-day."

"It's coming," murmured the safe opener.

"In the Name of God, Amen,"

resumed Suydam:

"I, Garret Kipp Duane, residing on the South Country Road in Blue Point, Suffolk County, State of New York, and being of sound and disposing mind and of sound body, but mindful of the uncertainty of this life, do make, publish and declare this for my last will and testament, hereby revoking and annulling any will heretofore made, in manner and substance as follows—to wit:

"I direct that my executors hereinafter named shall pay all my just debts and funeral expenses as soon after my decease as may be.

"To my friend Richard Phillipse, of West Eighty-fifth Street in the city of New York, hereinafter named as one of my executors, I give a certain sandalwood fan of Chinese make that is in a silver case in a drawer of the secretary in my living room in my Blue Point residence, and that I bought at a sale of the effects of one Jacob Koo. I give this to the said Richard Phillipse knowing of his peculiar interest in such objects, and knowing that he will cherish it as a memento

of me and will acquaint himself fully, if he be not already acquainted, with its special history.

"To Mary Kennedy, a domestic in my employ for the last fifteen years, I give the sum of twelve thousand dollars.

"To Jane Freeman, a domestic in my employ for the last ten years, I give the sum of eight thousand dollars.

"The two bequests last named shall be first charges on my residuary estate. I direct my executors to liquidate my estate, real and personal, as soon as in their opinion is advisable, to pay these charges over, and to pay the remainder in two equal parts to my sister Nell and my wife Florence. I make this division upon solemn consideration of my duty and putting aside prejudice and special favor.

"I appoint as my executors, Dr. Pierce Wessel, of Brightwood, Blue Point, New York, and Richard Phillipse, of New York City, both to serve without bond."

"Then comes the witness clause and the attestations, which will be passed on by the court of probate," said Suydam, passing the will to the widow for inspection. "You'll have nothing to do, Mr. Phillipse—Doctor Wessel—until I get

you your letters testamentary. You are willing to act as executors?"

"With pleasure," said Doctor Wessel.

"Certainly," said Dick. "And what about debts of the estate—shall we refer creditors to you?"

"You'll advertise for debts. By the way, there was a suit pending against Mr. Duane that should come up for trial shortly. You'll be substituted as defendants."

"As executors," said Doctor Wessel.

"Of course—no personal liability."

"What's the suit for?"

"On some notes that Mr. Duane indorsed back in 1913."

"Is the sum claimed very large?"

"With interest from 1913, it is very nearly three hundred thousand dollars."

"Three hundred thousand dollars!" exclaimed Dick. "Why, if the estate is obligated for that much, it will simplify our—can the estate meet a call like that?"

"I don't anticipate that the call will be made," said Suydam, with a shrug. "Mr. Duane defended on the ground that he received no consideration for his signature, and upon the ground that suit on the notes is barred by lapse of time. I think his defenses are good and that the suit

is only a strike for a settlement; but, as I told Mr. Duane—and as I now tell you—there is always a possibility that the court will disagree with me. You have a duty there, too—you are trustees for the creditors. I think the action will be dismissed, but I warn you as I warned Mr. Duane."

"There was something real for him to worry about," said Dick, glancing at his co-executor. "A chance of a three hundred thousand dollar judgment against him, eh? It would strip him naked."

"He could not pay it," said the widow, appalled. "Outside of this property, which Garry said was worth around seventy-five thousand dollars, he did not have more than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the world. I know very well what he had. He had stocks and bonds for that amount in that safe. It's lucky for me that this property is free and clear, and that creditors can't take it. I've inquired into the law as to that. What devils those people must be."

"This property, Mrs. Duane," said Suydam, turning from his contemplation of the man at the safe, "is not free and clear. Mr. Duane placed a mortgage for fifty thousand dollars on it during the week before he died."

"Without telling me! How could he?"

"You forget that he held the property in the

name of a corporation. But don't let that mortgage disturb you. He certainly couldn't have spent the money. It's safe in his account at the bank."

"But it isn't. We had only the one account—a joint account."

"My dear Mrs. Duane," said the lawyer soothingly, "don't fret yourself. I'm sure that the money is—"

His voice trailed off. He was watching the safe. They were all watching. There was a tension in the room. Feeling it, and relieving it by going from the important to the trifling, Suydam said, "That fan mentioned in the will, Mr. Phillipse, will be there, too, no doubt."

"Here she comes," said the safe opener. He swung the door back.

"Let the transfer tax man handle the securities," said Suydam cheerily. "Pardon me? What's that? Out of the light, please."

"There's nothing in it," said the representative of the state, with a touch of petulance. "Look; it's empty."

A moment of bewildered silence was ended by Suydam, who said in a tone of enlightenment: "Judgment proof."

## CHAPTER III

ICK PHILLIPSE left his office on Beekman Street at five o'clock, walked to Broadway and took an express elevator to Berney's Gymnasium. He was jaded; a spell of strenuous physical activity would restore him. The day, late in June, had been oppressive; desiccated by square miles of arid brick and stone, nothing of its freshness and sense of rushing growth survived to reach the city dweller.

Dick played four fast games of handball with an attendant, boxed two rounds with him, had a shower and plunge, and stepped on the scales.

"A hundred and eighty-one," announced the roly-poly and tireless gym worker, who had lounged through the work that had made Dick strain and puff. He eyed Dick's shining body critically. "Thirty-nine, aren't you, Mr. Phillipse? You're ready for the fight of your life."

"Look pretty good, do I?" Dick stretched his powerful five-feet-eleven.

"Oh, you can lick a lot more than can lick you,

but you'd be a set-up for the man you were when you were thirty. I mean, you're ready for the fight to keep that there plate"—he brought his hard fingers down over Dick's naked abdomen with a stinging flick—"from growing to a pail. That call I answered in the office was for you, Mr. Phillipse. It was only a lady, and when I told her you had very important business she left her number."

Dick dressed and went to the office. "This is Florence Duane," said the voice on the wire.

"Oh, hello, hello," said Dick, and the repetition was unmeditatedly caressing. Dick had been an eligible bachelor for nearly twenty years. "Where are you?"

"At the Commander. I'd like to see you."

"Indeed, yes. Are you alone? Perhaps you will take dinner with me."

"I could."

"I can be there at seven, if I bolt straight home now."

"Don't hurry so."

"Oh, but I must. Seven, then?"

He took the Subway to West Eighty-sixth Street, walked around the corner to the new Berkeley Chambers, wherein he had an apartment, dressed, and caught a cab for the Commander Hotel on Vanderbilt Avenue.

Florence Duane was waiting in the lounge. Her regard, as he approached her, had that lingering and amiable quality with which women repay the compliment of a handsome escort. As he took her wrap from her bare shoulders outside the dining room, he was glad that he had dressed, though he was also slightly surprised that she had brought a dinner gown with her on her flying visit to town.

"At Blue Point," she said when he inquired for Garry's sister in turn. "She'd be lost anywhere else. Nell's coming back very slowly. You don't approve of that, do you? The way I feel about it, Mr. Phillipse, I loved Garry more than anything else in the world, but, after all, he's dead, and I don't believe in living with the dead. Life's too short, and I'm young yet."

"Isn't it so?" he said, contemplating the dinner card.

"Can we get a cocktail here?"

"It might be negotiated," he said. "You won't mind if I don't join you? I'm in training for the fight of my life."

"I'm sure I don't know what I should do if I didn't have you." Her brilliant blue eyes dwelt on him with naïve satisfaction.

"The money will turn up, never fear," he said lightly, understanding that she was thinking of

small advances that he had made the estate from his own funds. "It's safe in some deposit box; we'll strike its trail any day."

"You don't doubt that it exists—that Garry didn't make away with it somehow?"

"Impossible. I've traced into his hands, through his brokers, the proceeds of securities in the sum of about one hundred and sixty thousand dollars; and there's that fifty thousand that he raised on the Blue Point property. The very first thing we did was to make dead sure that he had the money before his death. Very commonly death reveals that people who were supposed to be well off were just living from hand to mouth, but that wasn't Garry's case. He was thrifty."

"But so careless," she said. "I've often gone to the safe and found it open. I've begged him to put his money and securities in a bank where they belonged. Money meant nothing to him but something to gamble with. If he had two thousand, it was just two to him; if he had two hundred thousand, it was still only two. I've known that man to carry forty thousand dollars about in his pocket for days and days—that was when he was holding some bets on the Dempsey-Willard fight. Last November a sporty real-estate man gave him a tip on an office building here in New York, and Garry paid ten thousand dollars out

of his pocket for a contract at once; he sold the contract in a week for twenty thousand and put the money back into his pocket."

"He had no money in his pocket when he died."

"I wish I was sure of that!"

"Just what do you mean?"

"Nothing, I suppose." She lit a cigarette and puffed it jerkily. "But I know how terribly the poor boy was worrying about that lawsuit. Mr. Suydam thought that Garry cashed out all his property so that those people couldn't make him pay, and that that was why he didn't bank the money. The worry drove him to do what he did."

"There's no doubt that he sold his securities and placed that mortgage."

"Then he had the cash about him—in his pockets or in that safe. Perhaps the safe was open."

"Mrs. Duane, are you quite frank with me? It's my duty, as executor, to help you, and I'd be only too glad to do so in any event. Have you any reason for going back to the notion that the money was stolen? Just what are you thinking of?"

"Oh, I don't know. I've thought about it until I'm about crazy." She drew her full lips in and blew smoke from them hissing. When she spoke, her voice was sharp and her eyes were

threatening. "Why do you have to ask me? You're a man, Mr. Phillipse. Can't you do anything?" Before he could resent the imputation, her expression was melting; her hand went out to his and covered it where it lay on the table. "Oh, I know you are doing the very best that is possible."

He glanced down at the ruddy and polished nails of her strong and shapely fingers. "I'm trying to. But about that lawsuit—I wrote you this morning. It's been dismissed."

"That means we don't have to pay the three hundred thousand dollars?"

"You have to pay nothing at all, except a few hundred dollars to Suydam for his services. The incident is closed and we can forget about it; except as we have a souvenir of it in the fact that Garry put his property where a judgment creditor couldn't easily get hold of it. I think Suydam is right there."

"But I haven't told you yet what I came to see you about."

"I'm grateful to it just the same."

"A man named Zittel called me at Blue Point this morning—called me from New York—and told me he had seen someone around our place that night. I took his number and told him I'd be in the city this evening. I thought you'd like

to hear what he had to say. He seemed to be a gentleman."

"You have his telephone? Let's get hold of him."

Dick went out to a telephone and called the number that Florence Duane gave him. He got Mr. Zittel on the wire, and the gentleman offered to come at once to the hotel.

Dick returned to the table. The jazz band was yowling seductively and couples were rising and going to the waxed floor.

"May we?" said Florence Duane. The music excited her.

"*Mais oui,*" said Dick, rising compliantly. He did not relish the idea of dancing publicly with Garry's widow so soon after Garry's death, but he could not be her mentor in the matter. She was beautiful. Her heavy hair was as black as her gown; color was concentrated in her lips and eyes. She danced beautifully, with utter abandonment to the moment. She was radiant; Dick was suddenly aware of the attractiveness that had been obscured in the first days of her sorrow. Such a woman would take a man by storm.

"Thank you," he said with a deep breath as the music sobbed itself to death. They walked to their chairs silently.

The waiters' captain was paging Dick, who

beckoned. A slightly built man of some thirty years of age was walking slowly behind the stately servitor, and came now to the table. He wore perfectly fitting evening dress. His clear brown eyes looked with an effect of insolence through the glasses of a pince-nez from which depended a black cord. Dick didn't like him at first glimpse; to Dick, he looked at once knowing and inadequate.

"Mr. Phillipse?" said the newcomer, with a bright smile that made Dick like him much better. "I spoke to you on the phone."

"This is the gentleman who called you at Blue Point, Mrs. Duane," said Dick.

They chatted for a few minutes about nothing in particular. Then Zittel said: "I read that notice in the paper some days ago—about Mr. Duane's affairs. It seems that his estate—that is to say—"

"Exactly," said Dick.

"Terrible thing—particularly now," said Zittel, gazing absorbedly at the widow. "Well, this is my thought: I was driving on the South Country Road east of Bay Shore about eleven o'clock on the night of May twenty-first last, and I saw ahead of me a car parked by the side of the road. I made nothing of it, thinking it was some common petting party, and was driving by it when

something heavy and bulky struck my windshield. The surprise nearly sent me into the ditch. I pulled up short to see what had happened.

"A man in shirt sleeves came out of the darkness—a hard-looking customer, undersized, with a thin and red face, and during our meeting I noticed that the tops of his ears were cut off. I asked him what had happened to me, if he knew, and he said that he had thrown his jacket against my windshield to stop me; and then he asked me to let him have a little gasoline."

"Some crust!" commented Dick. "What did you do to him?"

"I gave him the gas. What could I do? I thought to the end that I was being held up. To send the police after him, I took particular note of his car, and got the number while he was unscrewing the tank cap.

"That was about eleven o'clock. Toward twelve o'clock I was returning to Bay Shore, and was passing Mr. Duane's place, which I knew by reputation, when I saw that very car parked by the road again. Well, from my impression of the man, he was nothing but a common thug, and dangerous; so, as a neighborly thing to do, I stopped at the first public telephone and called Mr. Duane and told him to watch his doors and windows. So, when I heard lately that a great

deal of property was missing, I decided to tell you what I'd seen and let you investigate this man."

"And very kind of you," bowed Dick. "You'd know him if you saw him again?"

"I have seen the car again."

"Where?"

"On Sixth Avenue near Fiftieth Street, outside a Chinese restaurant. The police should be able to find him for you."

"We should certainly give them a chance," exclaimed Florence Duane. "But you're not leaving us, are you, Mr. Zittel? Don't run away unless you have to. I want to take my time about thanking you."

Zittel seemed entirely willing to remain in her company. He was a sociable sort, and Dick found him rather engaging. He had the latest quips of Broadway on the tip of his nimble tongue, and that lent to his talk the charm of originality. His eyes dwelt almost constantly on Florence Duane. She must have observed his sudden fancy for her; she reserved to Dick her soft smiles and alluring cadences, and when she spoke to Zittel her tone was commanding. Dick was old enough to know that she was not rebuffing this new acquaintance. Before Dick saw Florence Duane to the elevator, Zittel had volunteered to go with him to police headquarters.

## CHAPTER IV

**S**HAT license number you gentlemen gave me," said Inspector Conlin, the gray old policeman who was commanding officer of the detective bureau, "don't belong on that car. It belongs to a school-teacher in Syracuse whose car was driven away, and this isn't the car. But I don't see what we can do for you; you have nothing on this man, whoever he was."

"But I saw him enter the house," said Zittel.

"How's that?" Conlin wheeled and leveled his hard black eyes. "Why didn't you say that right away?"

"I did. I told the officer outside. I'm pretty sure I did."

"What's your full name, mister?"

"Lowell Zittel."

"What do you do?"

"I'm a salesman of women's wear."

"For whom?"

"Stolnick and Garrabrant, of West Thirty-ninth Street."

"What were you doing down at Blue Point that night?"

"I was driving to Patchogue to visit a friend."

"What's his name?"

"It's a lady. I decline to state her name."

"Drove from New York?"

"From Bay Shore. I was calling on the trade there, and I stayed overnight—stayed at the Maple Avenue Hotel."

"Will you swear you saw that man enter?"

"Yes, sir."

Conlin turned to his desk. An officer in civilian clothes came into the room.

"Sergeant," said Conlin, "these men are friends of Garry Duane, the sporting man. You remember he killed himself at his place down in Blue Point about a month ago. We'll do what we can for them because Garry Duane was a good sport and a square shooter, although they ought to come through the local police down there. They think Duane's house was robbed that night by a man with clipped ears who drives a green roadster."

"An undersized man," amplified Zittel, "with a thin red face and a growling voice; like the inspector's, but deeper. Another thing I remember now is that when he walked he favored one leg."

"I'll see what we have," said the sergeant, going out.

"Wait outside for him, gentlemen."

Dick and Zittel withdrew to an anteroom. "You didn't tell me you saw that man enter the house," said Dick accusingly.

Lowell Zittel's left eye drooped insinuatingly. "I know how to do these things, Phillipse."

"But you won't swear to it if they ask you to?"

"I certainly will. Why, that only means that I accuse him of having entered. And we do accuse him, don't we? Else, what are we here for? I'll swear out a warrant for him, and then it will be up to him to prove he wasn't there. You let me manage this and we'll get results."

"No burglar," called the sergeant who, out of earshot, was leafing through a card index. "We have nothing on this bird. From his ears being cut off, he was probably a foreigner. Maybe a South American."

"No, he was an American," said Zittel positively.

"Then he was probably a sailor. Have you any idea where he hangs out?"

"I saw his car outside this Chinese place."

"Suppose you go up there with an officer."

"I'll do that."

"But really, Mr. Zittel," demurred Dick, "while

I appreciate the trouble you're taking, I don't think I can let you expose yourself——”

“I'll go the limit for that poor girl,” interrupted Zittel melodramatically. “Don't you get nervous, Phillipse. You don't have to go. The officer and I will take care of this. You'd only be in the way.”

“Perhaps I might,” said Dick, smiling at him with unruffled amiability. “It might be necessary to get in somebody's way, and I used to manage to do that years ago when I played football. If it's agreeable to the police, I'll go along with you.”

“I saw the car standing there about one o'clock in the morning,” said Zittel answering a query from the sergeant.

“We'll have Grover Black, of this office, to meet you there at half-past twelve to-night; he'll be on the southwest corner of Fiftieth Street.”

Shortly after midnight, Dick left Berkeley Chambers and caught a cab to Fiftieth Street, and found Zittel and the detective from Inspector Conlin's staff waiting under the Elevated station. The three men walked up Sixth Avenue and mounted a brilliantly lit and white-tiled stairway to Chin Wei's Cathay Restaurant.

To kill time, they ordered a large meal of terrifyingly named dishes. Zittel, who had assumed a tipsy manner by request of the detective, was

told now to get up and wander about. He went exploring.

A one-legged man, low-set and broad-shouldered, had come up from the street and was leaning on a crutch in the entrance to the restaurant. He scrutinized the lurching Zittel, threw a quick look at Black, and swung himself into the kitchen.

"Our friend wants to be quick," said Black dis-satisfiedly. "That's Tap-tap Tony, the boss of the gang that hangs out here. He knows me and he went in there to ask questions. Well, he won't learn anything except if there was a pinch made. A Chink never minds who or what his customers are if they don't interfere with his business."

The one-legged man came from the kitchen, passed Dick's table without even an oblique glance, and went down a passageway between partitions over which came festive voices. Zittel had gone that way only a minute before.

Black got up and followed him. Dick was behind him.

Zittel was leaning against the door frame on the threshold of a private inclosure. In this tiny private dining room two men and two women were sitting at a teakwood table finishing a meal. The one-legged man had brushed by Zittel and was standing at the farther side of the table.

Directly before him and facing the entrance was a small man with gaunt and seared face; his long black hair was combed very low, hiding all of his ears but the lobes.

He said in a harsh grumble, "This room is taken, friends."

"Don't I know you?" Zittel's stagger was artistic as he crossed to the black-haired man.

"Not me."

"Why, I met you one night on the road and you borrowed gas."

"Not me. Don't know you. Don't want to know you."

"It was on the South Country Road, outside the house of Garry Duane, the sporting man."

The black-haired man's manner had been contemptuous, but not aggressive. Now he tightened into alertness. Zittel reached out and swept aside the hair on his left temple, exposing a mutilated ear. "You're the same man."

The man with the cropped ears rapped out an oath and leaped to his feet. One of the women cried sharply and leaned forward, stretching an arm under the table.

Black's service revolver was in his hand. "Leave it there," he ordered crisply, referring, as Dick understood, to something that the woman had sought to pass under the table.

The man with the cropped ears searched the faces in the doorway. "You lie. I never seen you. I never was there."

"Didn't I stop right there in the road," argued Zittel, "and see you go into Garry Duane's house? Now you remember."

"Now that shows where you're lying," cried the man in unmeditated triumph. "Because the case is you can't see that house from the road on account of the trees!"

"All right, that proves it," chuckled the detective. "You're wanted down at headquarters to tell us about it."

"Who—me?"

"Come out here." He tapped the woman on the shoulder. "Let me have that gun."

"You'll give it back," she said, producing a nickel-plated revolver of the mail-order variety. "I can pack a rod. Right in that bag is a license I got last summer from a judge up in Sullivan County. You just want to show you're a cop."

"You get me a lawyer, Tony," growled the prisoner. "This is a frame. I never seen this man. You get me a lawyer, you hear?"

"The best in New York, Scissors," cordially replied the one-legged man, who had been still and observing during the episode. "Where are you taking him, officer?"

"Over to the house. And he's going to stay there until he goes downtown."

"Everybody got his own opinion," said the one-legged man mildly.

Dick left his name and address at the local station house and went home to bed.

He was in his apartment after dinner on the following evening when he received a ring from the telephone switchboard downstairs: "A Mr. Hinkle is calling on Mr. Phillipse."

"Hinkle? Who is he? What does he want?"

"He don't say, sir."

"Put him on. . . . hello, Mr. Hinkle?"

"Ambrose Hinkle, Mr. Phillipse."

"Oh, the well-known criminal lawyer."

"Thanks. I'd like to come up and see you."

"About that man who was arrested last night? I'm sorry, Mr. Hinkle, and I don't want to seem discourteous, but the matter is not in my hands, and it would do no good to talk to you about it."

"I think you'll find I have an interesting angle on it. Let me send you up an exhibit in the case. I'm giving it to the boy to take to you. I'll be here for a few minutes."

Dick hung up and went to the door. The elevator door clanged; the operator brought to Dick a silver box, superficially battered but sturdy, about a foot long by three inches wide and two

inches deep. The raised design on it was Chinese, and typically intricate and inscrutable, showing many blobby men and women posed like dolls amid houses as small as dog kennels, and trees upon which the misshapen figurines could have comfortably rested their elbows.

He opened the box. Within, on worn yellow silk, was a sandalwood fan.

He went to the telephone. "Let Mr. Hinkle come up at once!"

## CHAPTER V



WHILE awaiting the arrival of the criminal lawyer who was known to notoriety as Little Amby, Dick examined the fan that had come so oddly into his hands.

It was a surprisingly cheap thing, worth only a dollar or so, a sample of the tawdry trade goods that adventurous Chinese merchants import to America to exchange for the gold and silver of the natives. It was sandalwood, and properly fretted with holes, but it was machine made and showed no sincere attempt at artistry. It belonged with superstitious little images of wise monkeys, and with dragon-festooned crockery jars; it didn't belong in a solid silver box that Dick would have given a hundred dollars for like a wink. Looking at the box, Dick could be properly grateful to Garry Duane, the donor.

The doorbell rang. Dick's man answered it and ushered into the living room a trig little gentleman of middle age who was attired with fastidious vulgarity in a black-and-white-check

suit, a scarlet necktie with gleaming stickpin below the soft collar of a green silk shirt, and patent-leather pumps.

"Mr. Phillipse?" The manner and the slightly nasal voice were rather pompous. "The man's an actor," thought Dick, without meaning a compliment. He liked people to be themselves, not realizing how unfair it was to ask that of such fellow mortals as were small and furtive and rascally and badly in need of a front. And then he was gazing into as cajoling and knowing a pair of black eyes as he had ever seen in human head.

"A pleasure, Mr. Hinkle," he said, taking the lawyer's silky and small-boned hand.

Little Amby sat down in a chair that swallowed him to the ears, and tapped a gold-tipped cigarette on a gold case while prismatic flame flickered across the row of large diamonds in the rings on his hand. He drew a varicolored silk handkerchief from his breast pocket whence it had coyly peeped, leaned over and flicked with deliberation a breath of dust from his gleaming footgear; the handkerchief, or shoe rag, was heavily perfumed. Dick objected to jeweled and perfumed men, thinking them unmanly; he was almost forty and was getting set in his ideas. He was beginning to identify his prejudices and

coddled notions, as successful men will, with the public weal, sound morality, and the laws of Nature. He looked with cheerful condescension at Little Amby, who, being well over forty and even more set, now looked back at him judicially and prepared to assign him to his ordained place as a fool or a rascal.

"I thank you for the fan," said Dick. "May I ask where you got it?"

"From Mr. Scissors Lafetra, a client."

"Oh, the man who's in jail."

"No."

"Is he out?"

"To-day, on a habeas corpus."

"Why, I don't understand that. The police were holding him for questioning."

"There's no provision in our law, Mr. Phillipse —none that I'm acquainted with," said Little Amby, letting his stomach swell impressively—"for pulling citizens in merely to put them to the question. This is America, and not the Middle Ages. That's police oppression, and it's the sort of outrage that the writ of habeas corpus protects the public against. It compels the police, or any other incarcerators, to produce the prisoner in court and give a good legal reason why he should be in jail."

"But didn't a witness that was passing on the

road see your man entering Garry Duane's house that night?"

"If that was so, Mr. Phillipse, the court would have held him until proper process could attach; and if I thought it was so, I wouldn't lift a finger for him. I shot a man down there to Blue Point to snap the house from the road. It's off there behind a forest of trees, and you can't see a sign of it at ten o'clock in the morning. That witness, Zittel, committed plain perjury. But that's no novelty in our courts, I'm sorry to say. Mr. Phillipse, you laymen have no idea of what we lawyers have to contend with; conditions are something frightful. People nowadays don't seem to value the obligation of an oath any more than yesterday's newspaper. That's what we meet; and how can a lawyer beat a case when he can't choose his defense until he hears the other side testify? It's getting so bad that when we hear the truth from the stand, we have to claim surprise and demand an adjournment. That's a humorous exaggeration, of course. You understand, Mr. Phillipse, that I'm not criticizing your attitude in the matter—although you are the real party in interest. I know you don't countenance perjury."

"I don't," said Dick. He might have been more hearty about it if the dapper little man in

the big chair opposite were not, by common report, the most unscrupulous practitioner of the city bar. However, he was feeling apologetic and properly rebuked for his complaisance, when he thought of the fan. "But, look here," he said strongly, "where did your man get that?"

"Out of Garry Duane's house that night."

"Oho, then he did break into the house that night!"

"I'm not debating that. The point I take is that he did not get due process of law. Even a criminal is entitled to that. The fundamental institutions that are the glory of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence—"

"What do you expect me to do, Mr. Hinkle?"

"Mr. Phillipse," said Little Amby, breathing smoke lightly, "you will do as your honor and conscience dictate. Here's a man who walked out of court as free as good advice, and then he turns around of his own free will and hands you back the loot. Are you going down now, with the evidence he put into your hands, and take out a warrant?"

"Certainly not—not on a charge of stealing these things."

"Just what I told him. I told him he'd find you a man and a sportsman. But why do you specify these things? Is it common sense to sup-

pose that he bagged something else? Would he put that evidence into your hands?"

"It certainly doesn't look that way," said Dick slowly. "However, I don't bind myself not to proceed against him if it should appear in the future that he has not made full restitution."

"Agreed. The simple facts are that this man, driving a car, had lost his way, and seeing this house——"

"From the road?"

"No, when he got up to it. He walked in to ask a direction and nobody was around. Being well-meaning but light-fingered, he lifted this pretty silver box, and walked out. A complete stranger to whatever transpired in Garry Duane's house that night, and learning later—with what consternation you may imagine—that insinuations were being made against him."

"He wasn't exactly inveigled in there, Mr. Hinkle," said Dick with a trace of impatience.

"Granted," said Little Amby, seeing that he was laying it on too thick. "He admits your entire case, gives you conclusive proof of his part in it, and throws himself on your mercy."

"But, Mr. Hinkle, you don't want me to believe that you came here solely to restore this property."

"I do," said Little Amby steadily. And only

after Dick had abandoned the attempt to stare him out of a look of honesty that long usage had made second nature to him, he resumed: "But I have a more solemn reason than mere solicitude for you in your trifling loss. I am here, Mr. Phillipse, out of respect for the dead—because I would not permit my interest, or that of any client, to interfere with the solemn duty that we all owe to those who have joined the great majority."

"Well," said Dick undecidedly. As a good citizen, he had done jury duty in his time, and the voice of his visitor had become suspiciously orotund. Little Amby was feeling in his pockets.

"There was this letter in the box, addressed to you, Mr. Phillipse."

Dick pulled the inclosure from the unstamped envelope. "Pardon me."

*Dear Dick:* I write this in case—get ready to laugh—I should die before your return to America. As this letter will probably pass through other hands before you see it, I won't explain more about that.

Dick, I'm being sued for a great deal of money on a snide claim. You know I pay my honest debts. But if I should die with my affairs as they are, and if this claim should be upheld by the

courts, my estate would be stripped and those dependent on me would be thrown out on the world penniless.

I want you to take care of things and am making you my executor, with Doctor Wessel, who, I think, is my true friend. Sit tight until that rotten claim is settled, one way or other. Tell them all you know, let them take all they can find; don't conceal any assets or tell any lies for me. When they give up hope, buy them off for two cents on the dollar.

Then get busy with this fan. You know all about fans, that being your specialty. Having the fan, you'll know what to look for next, and I will tell you where it will be. It will be in my safe. I'll put a lot of other odds and ends in with it, so nobody but you will recognize it. Suydam tells me that a hundred and fifty dollars' worth of personal stuff is exempt from their execution.

Dick, the fan is mentioned in that will I made yesterday while I was reflecting on the uncertainty of life, especially for a man like myself who has trod on people's toes in a business way, but I give it to you now so that nobody can take it away under a claim against my estate. I've told Nell to give it to you, and I guess she did. I've done a lot of studying to fix up something

that would work and that wouldn't ask you to do anything wrong—you wouldn't do it, you darned old Puritan.

Dick, I hope I'm just morbid and losing my nerve. You don't have to sit up nights figuring how to get a hold of my money so as to give it to strangers, do you? Tell them all you know about what I got and sit back and let them go the limit. When they have signed off, you get busy and turn a last trick for your old friend,

GARRY DUANE.

Dick sat silent for a moment, toying with the letter from his vanished friend. Its light tone did not beguile him into a smile; its casual phrasing did not incline him to slight its content. He had been listening to the compelling voice of the dead.

"That's why you got the fan," said Little Amby, "and that's why you can command me for anything in my power. I think it might help you to clear the ground if I were to send Scissors Lafetra down to Blue Point with you and have him show you just what he did that night, and all he noticed."

"Not a bad idea. You are very kind. I'm thinking about this reference to the safe. The safe was empty."

"Empty? Strange. Well, I suppose a man who is worked up to the killing pitch doesn't do everything according to Hoyle. The tone of the letter, too, doesn't quite chime with the idea that it was penned by a man meaning suicide. There's no question but that Garry Duane killed himself?"

"That hardly admits of argument or surmise. Doctor Wessel made the certificate, and you see right there that he was Garry Duane's friend."

"Just a flash," said Little Amby. "He says you're an expert on fans. What is there about that fan?"

"His ideas were altogether too flattering," said Dick, turning the commonplace fan over. "I don't begin to know everything about fans. For instance, I don't know a thing about this one, beyond what shows on the surface."

"You collect fans, don't you, Mr. Phillipse?"

"Perhaps you'd like to see what I have here," said Dick, hoping to afford a half hour's entertainment to a man who had done him a graceful service. He led the way into a room that the builders of the Berkeley Chambers had intended for a library or guest room.

"To begin at the beginning," he said, pausing before a tall glass case, "here's an antique I picked up in Egypt."

"It looks more like a snow shovel," commented Little Amby, whose unusual breadth of information was largely due to his never hesitating to show his ignorance.

"It does, somewhat. Those holes bored all around the rim held ostrich feathers. It's supposed to date from the time of Rameses the Great, who lived not long after Moses."

"What Moses was that?" asked Little Amby interestedly. Being a New Yorker, he knew not a few of the name. "What—you don't say—you mean the Moses who brought the plagues into Egypt, according to the books?"

"That Moses. You remember that one plague he inflicted on them was a plague of flies. He certainly must have produced them in quantity to get under the skins of those people, for they had lots of flies of their own. You can imagine conditions in a hot and dirty country, with no screens on the windows. That's how the fan developed. When an Egyptian made money, he bought a fan like that, and a slave to swing it and drive the flies from his master. The man with the fan is a stock figure in the old bas-reliefs.

"There's a similar flyflap from old Mexico, with staff inlaid with semiprecious stones. There's the Mexican word for such fans—*tleoatzehuaquetzalli*."

"The flies would have me before I could holler for that!" chuckled Little Amby. He was leaning over a glass case. "There's a pretty one—as good as an oil painting. How much is that one worth?"

Dick glanced compliantly at a beauty whose leaf had been painted by Boucher. "I paid three thousand dollars for it, and it was a bargain."

"Here's an open-work one," said Little Amby, after a prolonged and respectful stare at the ounces of parchment that had fetched the price of a race horse.

"Cabriolet—Louis Quinze. There's a painted Dutch fan of the early eighteenth century. There's one—that one that seems to be closed—that's a bit of a curiosity. It's a dagger fan of the Italian Renaissance. Let me show it to you. You press here, and—pull on the handle, and—it comes off, and you have a businesslike stiletto in your hand."

"Preparedness, eh?" said Little Amby, looking at the strong and blood-guttered blade. "I can see where a cavalier of those times would put on his best boiler plate when he went to pet."

"There's an iron fan from Japan. Such fans were carried by fencing masters to defend themselves from people of low blood. The Japanese, as you know, are a very punctilious people, some-

times valuing life less than etiquette. To my mind, it's another example of their racial imitativeness; a man has little original force of his own who can be trained out of all sense of proportion. The Japanese fencing master would be killed, fan in hand, rather than soil his sword with low blood. Here are painted Japanese fans. . . . They are certainly a most artistic people, but their art, due to their imitativeness, is conventionalized."

"Very pretty," said Little Amby, contemplating a flight of black crows executed by the great Kiyosai. "And where are your Chinese fans?"

"Here is a war fan. The handle, you see, is iron and can be used as a club; the chief purpose of the fan was for signaling orders to the troops."

"Oh, yes—but fans of a smaller variety?"

"Here is one in *vernis Martin*—Louis the Fifteenth again. The Martin brothers—four of them—were in the business of manufacturing varnish, as the words indicate, and they turned out a mighty good article—good enough to stand competition with the really marvelous Chinese lacquers—"

"But they were Frenchmen, weren't they?"

"Oh, I see—pardon me. You're interested

more in Chinese fans. Here's one in ivory and mother of pearl, with a painted silk leaf. Personally, I don't care for the Chinese art—you see how they join incongruous materials. Here are carved faces in ivory fastened to figures painted on the silk. And they're too fond of gaudy effects. The Chinese conception seems to be to dazzle—quite different from the Japanese, whose work can be seen at a glance, but is not to be appreciated without contemplation. The slapdash effect of the Japanese is to be discounted; they worked very quickly because they never worked from Nature; the picture was complete in the artist's mind before he put his brush of India ink to his mouth. Kiyosai probably struck off that picture in ten minutes, but he may have spent a year in thinking about it."

Dick stopped talking about his beloved fans because he thought his guest's interest was flagging. Little Amby was still strolling amid the cases, but his glance was flitting from fan to fan.

"And where are your sandalwood fans?" he asked.

"I have no example in sandalwood alone," Dick acknowledged. "Here is an old Chinese in sandalwood, gold filigree and enamel. And here is a very fine one indeed, with painted leaf and carved sandalwood sticks."

"You have one now, anyway, to add to your collection."

"Yes," said Dick. "And I'm tremendously obliged to you for it."

"Well, Mr. Phillipse," said Little Amby, tendering his hand, "I have to run along. There's a poker game down at the Abernathy on Broadway that's simply screaming for me by now. But I'm greatly taken with these fans of yours, and you must let me come back again and browse over them. I had no idea fans amounted to so much. I never took any stock in this collecting thing, but I feel I'd like to sit into the game myself now, after looking at what you have and listening to your descriptions."

"You'd enjoy it and get a lot out of it, Mr. Hinkle. Those fans are a historical record. Another man collects furniture, and those tables and chairs make past history real and understandable to him. It is quite a thing now to collect bottles —old whisky bottles."

"I have a few of those myself, Mr. Phillipse. I can't say the whisky is as old as it might be, but I'd love your expert opinion."

"I look forward to the pleasure. But if I may bore you another instant, the thought I have in mind is that collecting is not a crotchet or eccentricity, but is a man's way of expressing his inter-

est in the world and people. As a business man, I get much the same kick out of making myself broadly conversant with prices. Most Americans collect prices, so to say, and so do I. There was a snobbish Irishman who said snippily that 'Americans know the price of everything and the value of nothing.' A man who knows the price of everything has a complete picture of the world he lives in. That Irishman was ignorant of the business world, and showed it."

It hung in Dick's mind that he had felt a passing irritation, and had possibly shown it, when his guest had asked the price of the Boucher fan.

"You should be a lawyer, Mr. Phillipse," said Little Amby, not without irony. "You brief the case for vulgarians like myself with ability. Until another time? Good night."

## CHAPTER VI

ICK entered the gloomy precincts of the Barkin Art & Auction Mart, on Columbus Avenue in the lower Eighties.

He heard a powerful barytone bellowing and pleading in a recess, and he followed it through a maze of stately and outmoded furniture until he came to a cleared space lit by flaring gas and saw an anguished human figure standing on a promontory. The figure was that of a stout man in shirt sleeves—the man was Mr. Joel Barkin. Before Mr. Barkin was a motley array of rooming-house keepers, strays, loafers, and designing women who had followed the red flag in the laudable hope of picking up for a dollar-thirty some aged trash that they might plausibly attribute to their great-grandmother.

“And it is sold!” said Mr. Barkin, bringing down his gavel. “I congratulate you, Mrs. Dalrymple, on the bargain of the sale. That will be all for to-day. Ten o’clock to-morrow the sumptuous furnishings and art collections removed from the palatial mansion of a Newport

gentleman, with slight additions from storage warehouses. . . . Good afternoon, sir. What can I show you?"

The last was addressed to Dick, upon whom Mr. Barkin had instantly fastened a detaining and unwavering eye.

"About two months ago," said Dick, "you auctioned here a variety of objects belonging to the estate of one Jacob Koo."

"As is," nodded Mr. Barkin.

"Here is something bought at that sale," said Dick, unrolling the silver box.

"Now, my dear man," said Mr. Barkin, taking Dick persuasively by the shoulder and refusing to look at the object unrolled, "I got trouble enough of my own. When you buy at auction, you buy as is, and it don't do no good to come back after two months and weep. I remember very well when you made that bid, and I said to my man Moe, I said, 'Moe, bring that lot down to that gentleman whose bid it is and let him see what he's bidding on, because we don't want no weeping.' I been thirty years in business, and I give you my word as a man and a brother that this is the first time in all my experience that a customer comes back to me and wants to give me an argument. I hope I am stepped on by a truck the minute I leave this store."

He cast a single look at the silver box that should have made the paper curl about it again of its own motion, but that look became at once sweet and reasonable.

"Well, now I do recollect the occasion, brother," he said soothingly. He took the box, opened it, glanced into it, and snapped it shut. "That is that stuff from the Chinaman. My error, brother—pardon me—I beg your pardon. Go to the office and tell the bookkeeper to give you your money. We all make mistakes now and then, brother, and if such a thing as my man Moe has his hand over the defect, we don't take advantage of a customer's excitement. I been thirty years in business and never had a dissatisfied customer, and don't want one. Go get your money. Is that doing you right?"

"But I'm not trying to sell this," interrupted Dick. "Please let me get in a word. This property was bought here, but not by me. I simply want to get in touch with the people on whose account you sold it. I want some information about it, that's all."

"All I know about it is that it was bought here by a gentleman that came in with a blind lady. They just happened in, as people do all the time, knowing the place's reputation, and I never seen either one of them before or since. They paid

cash—seventy dollars—and walked out with the goods, so I had no tracer on them. Why don't you let me sell it for you—put it in the Saturday sale? I got some people who are very specially interested in that line of goods, and I'll get them here, and I can probably get you up to a hundred and a quarter."

"No, thank you. I merely want to know on whose account you sold."

"Come over here," said Mr. Barkin, leading Dick, for no evident reason, a few steps. "Brother, do you want to sell that? Everything in the world is for sale. It's only a matter of getting together, ain't it? I won't barter with you. I'll give you two hundred dollars cash money. No, brother, don't come back with no counter offer. Two hundred dollars is my story, and I'm going to stick to it. Go to the office and get your money, and I congratulate you."

"Please try to grasp the fact that this is not for sale, Mr. Barkin—not for two hundred thousand dollars. Will you kindly give the information I ask?"

"Well, I will do this," said the auctioneer reluctantly: "I will give you the party and you can go to work on him, and when you are got his top, I will ask you to come back here and tell me, and

give me half of what I can get for you over and above."

"Mr. Barkin, if I sell that fan I'll employ you as my agent."

"Well, I sold that for the account of a Chinese party named Huey Gow that was running a Chinese boarding house on Seventy-seventh Street across from the Museum. It seems he had stopping with him this party Jacob Koo, and this Jacob Koo was tomahawked early one morning and found in the areaway. So, it being that Koo was back in his rent, Huey Gow brought his belongings over here and auctioned them off."

"And you don't know anything more about the fan?"

"Well, I will tell you. This Huey Gow is quite an American, and he had an idea he ought to come and cap for me, and he made a spiel at the sale about this fan, telling all about it and probably a lot more. I did not pay attention to his arguments because I got trouble of my own, and all I remember was this Huey Gow saying there was only two fans like this in the whole world, and even that sounded like hooey."

"He's on Seventy-seventh Street? He's my man. He told all about the fan, eh?"

"Not on Seventy-seventh Street. He's out of there. He got in wrong with the police, some-

how, and they framed him with a claim that he was running a game, and being under suspicion of being a Chinaman anyway, he had no chance to beat the case, and went out."

"Where is he now?"

"He is running a game on Doyers Street. If you want to see him, you want to go down on Sunday. He don't work any other day."

"A Chinese gambling den?" said Dick doubtfully.

"Never you fear. You're as safe there as in church. Those Chinese are peaceful and lawful, and only asking to mind their own business and you mind yours. I've always found them perfect gentlemen. This affair of Jacob Koo? Well, we all make mistakes now and then, brother. I'll give you the address on one of my cards, and you send it up to Huey Gow and he'll recognize it. Go next Sunday afternoon."

On the following Sunday afternoon Dick mounted from the Subway at City Hall, walked eastward on Chambers Street to Park Row, and thence through Chatham Square to the Bowery. He penetrated narrow and twisting Doyers Street—less than three hundred feet long, and the main artery of New York's Chinatown, an amusement resort whose resident population is multiplied by five on Sunday.

He made his way through the crowd of Orientals who had flocked in from fifty miles about, a depressing throng of shrouded figures drifting over the dirty pavement like drowned men, and with little more life in their faces. They were set off against the policeman who was strolling among them, himself an importation but from an egotistical and assertive race, thrusting his big stomach out, putting his big feet down flat, eyeing the drooping men about him with benevolent contempt.

The Chinese were drifting in and out of the houses. Dick followed three round-shouldered figures into a dingy tenement. Men were slipping up and down the uncarpeted stairs, up and down. A Chinese in American dress, with a derby hat on the back of his sleek black head and with a bad cigar between his purplish lips, was sitting on the stairs.

"What you want?" he droned. "See Chinatown? Not here."

"I want to see Mr. Huey Gow," said Dick.

"Huey Gow? Huey Gow?" intoned the man.

"I understand he is here to-day. I was sent by Mr. Barkin."

"What for?"

"I'll tell him that."

"No, you tell me."

"Do you know him?"

"Maybe. What for?"

Dick wanted to observe the etiquette of Mr. Huey Gow's house, and the man on the stairs spoke English at least.

"He used to own this, and I understand he wants to see it again. I'd like to talk to him about it."

The man put out a thin hand for the box, opened it and looked into it.

"What for Huey Gow want this?"

"Now you're going too deep into the subject," said Dick. "I will talk to Huey Gow."

The man called aloud and a Chinese came down the stairs to him. They chattered together, and the second Chinese went out into Doyers Street. He returned with a third Oriental and went upstairs again, leaving the new arrival with the man on the stairs. They talked at length, seeming to talk about the box, and then the third man went upstairs, too.

"He say right away," said the fellow on the stairs, giving Dick back his box.

After some minutes the third man appeared at the head of the stairs and beckoned. Dick went up. He followed his guide up another flight and down a narrow hall. He stopped before a door through whose transom came a frantic yelping,

and his guide indicated that he should go in there.

Dick found himself in a room about ten feet wide by fifteen feet long, in the middle of which was an oblong table of rough boards. Chinese were ranked solidly about the table, so that Dick had to push his way among them. They paid him no heed, their attention being concentrated on the table, and Dick won to it before his alien presence was noted. He saw that it had been lined off into four squares and that there was a small heap of buttons in its center. A Chinese was taking buttons from this heap with a long stick, raking them out four at a time.

The yelping—which was probably a way of invoking luck—ceased suddenly, and the Chinese who had been manipulating the buttons dropped his stick. The company stood stock-still with their hands hidden in their wide sleeves.

“Is Huey Gow here?” demanded Dick, divining that he was the cause of the cessation.

“Here is Huey Gow,” said a voice behind him. Dick turned and saw that a Chinaman in American dress had followed him into the room. “Come out. You got no right here. Who send you here?”

“Your man told me to come in here, Mr. Huey

Gow," said Dick, following him. "I didn't mean to intrude."

"The man tell you?" The slant eyes in Huey Gow's fat face glinted aside, and Dick saw that his guide was waiting with three other Chinese at the head of the stairs. Their manner was peaceable; the guide was telling a good story and all were laughing.

"Some months ago you sold at auction through Mr. Barkin some things that had belonged to a man called Jacob Koo."

"Maybe."

"Among these things was this fan," continued Dick, tendering the Chinese the silver box. "I am very anxious to have a talk with you about this fan, and I can make it well worth your while."

Huey Gow took the box, opened it and took out the fan. He unfolded the fan, stared at it in silence, and put it back in the box. He handed the box to Dick.

"I don't buy," he said.

"I'm not asking you to buy it."

"I don't buy," repeated Huey Gow. "This man tell you I buy?"

"Oh, no. I met him downstairs just now, when I asked for you."

"He tell me give him ten dollars," said Huey

Gow in a soft voice. "I give him ten dollars."

He waddled down the hall to the merry group. He whisked something out of his trousers pocket, and brought it down with a vicious swing upon the guide's head. The man uttered a short scream and fell to the floor, whereupon his three merry comrades sprang upon him and kicked him mercilessly; Huey Gow darted about with poised arm, trying to get in another blow.

Dick did not like to impose his foreign prejudices upon the people he was among, but he saw at once that the man was being beaten to death. He was limp and seemingly unconscious, and his four assailants were beating him with all their might. It was horrible, nightmarish.

"Here!" cried Dick, running up. "Stop this!"

He caught Huey Gow by the soft shoulder and yanked him back. An earnest shove sent two of the other fellows toppling.

Huey Gow reeled back against the wall, braced himself and ran at Dick with hand overhead. Dick dodged the impending blow and whipped up his right fist to the Chinaman's head. Huey Gow came down to the floor in a sitting posture, rolled over, got to his feet and ran up the hall in the wake of his three assistants.

Dick did not await their possible return, nor did he bother further with the man on the floor. The

man's punishment had been extreme, but he was not exactly a blameless character; Dick guessed that the watchman on the stairs had got this man to go up and give Huey Gow a squeeze.

Dick found on the stairs the thing that Huey Gow had been using. It was a leather strap ending in a small leather ball, that, from its weight, evidently held a lump of metal. Dick rolled it up and slipped it in his pocket for a souvenir, telling himself ruefully that it was all he could hope to get from Huey Gow now.

When he got to the street he told the policeman what had happened, and offered to appear if the injured man made a charge against the gambler.

"Go along, me boy," said the officer. "You're out of it—stay out. Not a blessed word would that villain testify agin anyone but yourself. I don't know what kind of men they are at all."

## CHAPTER VII



HE Fourth of July fell on Sunday that year, which made Monday a holiday and stretched the week-end. Dick was invited down to Blue Point by the Duane family, and upon due consideration he decided that it was his duty as executor to accept, even if his acceptance involved seeing Nell Duane. He called up Little Amby and asked the lawyer to send Scissors Lafetra down there on Saturday the third.

Nell was walking on the bricked path that led from the house to the gate. Dick was surprised anew at the sureness and freedom of her carriage. Her light summer dress was green and black,—which set off the soft pallor of her skin and the red lights in her brown hair. She stopped when she heard the car. Behind her was the billowy green and gray and black of the spruces, so that her dress was indistinctly seen, and her head and bust were statuesque. He halted the car and sounded the horn. Her black-lashed gray eyes with the curiously expanded

pupils were wide, and he knew that she could not see him, but before he spoke she cried, "Hello, Dick!"

"Doctor Wessel told me you can see and don't know it," he said, going to her.

"Doctor Wessel must have a bad conscience," she laughed, taking both his hands. "How are you, Dick? I knew you were coming."

"You're farsighted."

"No, psychic. I'm psychic, Dick. I do know things about people—I do, really. I was reading a book yesterday about some phenomena of blindness and I became quite annoyed with it. The writer had so much to say about the sharpening of the other senses in compensation. He said that when I—of course, Dick, he was speaking of no one but me—when I approach an object I know it because my extrasensitive skin feels the currents of air curving away from that other surface. No such thing—I simply know it's there."

"He probably blundered because he was writing about you in particular, Nell. I've noticed myself your peculiarly smooth and delicate complexion."

"Go on, you city chap. I'm psychic and I refuse to be anything else. How did I know you were coming just now?"

"Oh, I was kicking up a terrible fuss. Who's at the house? Come, get in the car."

"People I don't like. Psychic, again. There's a fellow named Zittel who gives me the creeps. I can speak about him because he's not my guest, but Flo's; you're my guest. And Doctor Wessel is there just now, and Suydam the lawyer has come over to meet you."

"How do you like Doctor Wessel, psychically?"

"He's blind and doesn't know it. Flo says you introduced Zittel to her, and that he was awfully helpful. Do you like him?"

"He seems a very decent sort. I didn't quite take to him at first sight, but—"

"That's it. You didn't like him before you saw him. Here we are—don't fall over that first step. Most people do. Do you know, Dick, that the universe is pitch dark, except for little rings of light around the stars? Away out there beyond our ring—" She ceased; her lips trembled. He put his hand over hers with a gesture of unaffected sympathy, as he would have comforted any creature in distress. "Hold it tight, Dick. Thank you. I thought of Garry. Well, here we are. Let me have your bag. Oh, let me have it."

"It is rather heavy for me," he said seriously, taking her free arm. They mounted to the house.

"You big brute," exclaimed Florence Duane, throwing the screen door wide. "You're just in time for a drink. Will you take that bag from that child? I think you'd make a first-class wife beater."

"Hit and run, Mrs. Duane." She was gay and genial. He noted the tinge of rose in her curving and ordinarily colorless cheeks; the blue of her eyes was heated, made darker and yet more brilliant. "Make mine very light, please. . . . Hello, doctor. . . . I have that fan," he announced some minutes later—"the fan that was mentioned in the will. I have Mr. Zittel to thank for it."

"How's that?" asked the salesman of women's wear.

"You know that fellow you had arrested for entering this house? His lawyer came to see me the following night and told me that his man had been discharged in court, but that out of a sense of remorse he had given the lawyer the fan for me. It seems that he did enter here, but that that was all he took."

"I don't believe it," said Zittel angrily. "Where did all Mr. Duane's money disappear to? The police ought to have held that man and given him the third degree. I hope you didn't say you'd let him go on account of that miserable fan."

"I said something to that effect." Dick looked steadily at Zittel, trying to suggest to him that he was taking an undue interest in the matter.

"Well, I must say——"

"Lowell," said Mrs. Duane distinctly. She frowned at Zittel and he subsided. Dick saw that Zittel had tried to make interest with her by an affectation of energy in her behalf, and she proposed to keep him abject, with no assumption of the airs of a benefactor.

He wondered if she had ever loved Garry, since, hardly more than six weeks after his death, she could take pleasure in the attentions of a shallow fellow like Zittel. She was no longer the bereft widow; she was only a woman in black, and black became her.

She spoke for herself, having silenced her admirer: "What have you to tell us about the estate, Mr. Phillipse? Dick, I should say—if Nell will let me. You thought you would discover it hidden in some safe-deposit box or private account where Garry had put it to save it from those people who sued him. But I suppose you haven't come on the trail to it."

"I think I have," announced Dick.

"Really? Oh, good!"

"There was a letter in the fan case, addressed to me."

"Garry put it there; I remember that," confirmed Nell.

"It's very interesting, whatever it may lead to. It has led to nothing so far. Shall I read it? You should all be familiar with its contents, and we'll have the benefit of everybody's counsel."

He read the letter aloud.

"Where is the fan?" asked Suydam. "And you do know all about it, do you, Phillipse?"

"No, unfortunately—nor does anyone. You know that Garry picked it up at an auction he chanced into on Columbus Avenue. You were with him, Nell."

"Yes, his first thought was to buy it for me. It's a perfect beauty."

"Indeed yes," said Dick considerately. "Well, I went to that place to trace the fan back to the original owner and learn its special qualities. But by the way, Nell, you were there when a Chinaman explained about this fan."

"I was in the front of the place trying a violin that was to be offered. Garry and I often went to auction rooms. I do remember that something was said about the fan, but Garry wouldn't tell me. He didn't want me to know what there was about it."

"He didn't want anybody to know but Dick Phillipse—and now it seems that he doesn't know

either." Florence's bland tone had suddenly become caustic. But she was smiling at Dick at once, mutely asking forgiveness. "But you didn't stop with making an inquiry at the auction room, I'm sure."

"I'm following up what I got there, but have nothing definite yet," he said, evasively, feeling that his audience might not be wholly sympathetic if he stated that he had gone to the logical informant and promptly knocked him down. "However, here's something that may shed a light in the immediate neighborhood of the mystery. The man whom you had arrested, Zittel, is coming here to show us just what he did that night. His lawyer volunteered the man's services."

"I don't see what use that will be," said Zittel contrarily. "The information we have now makes me think that Mr. Duane hid that money himself. May I have a look at that fan?"

"I'm sure it would be quite all right," said Dick hesitatingly. "Although from the tone of that letter it would seem that Garry didn't want me to let the fan out of my own hands. If the ladies are entirely willing——"

"Oh, let him see it," said Florence slightly. "Garry's reason for secrecy was his fear that those people who sued him on the notes would seize all he owned, and that's out now. His whole

procedure was most ill-advised. I sometimes think the poor boy was mentally unbalanced. See what he says there about expecting to die."

"Those expectations were soon justified," put in Dick.

"Mere wish fulfillment," said Doctor Wessel. "He wished to die. The color of his mind was typical of the alcoholic—filled with suspicion. He even said something to me once—he retracted it with shame when I brought it out into the open—that indicated the beginning of a suspicion of his wife."

"Pardon me," gasped Florence, her eyes widening. "To my knowledge, he never gave the least indication of that."

"Typical," said Doctor Wessel, elevating his long hands and wagging his head in an effort to explain. "The mind's normal associations are broken up. The subject's delusions do not formulate themselves in conduct; there is no harmony between the ideas and the acts. The delusion of marital infidelity is extremely common; also the notion that people are leagued against him and that he is being poisoned. There is a deterioration of character, with no care whatever for honor or family ties. With impaired memory, bad judgment, irritable, brutish——"

"How dare you!" cried Nell, leaping to her

feet, her hands clenched in fury. "These are the lies and delusions. Garry was not like that! He was good, kind, honest, loving—you are horrible people."

She ran from the room. "I'm sorry," said Doctor Wessel.

"Following your suggestion, Mrs. Duane," said Dick quickly, preventing a painful silence, "you will be wise to observe all possible precautions in recovering this enormous sum of money. It is true that your legal title to it is established, and there are now no sizable charges against it; but don't forget that it's unfound and that it's something around two hundred thousand dollars in hard cash. Don't talk about it outside of ourselves. You can readily see the danger of spreading the news that a fortune in ready cash is awaiting a finder."

"I may have spoken to people," said Florence, with a slight toss of the head. "One must talk! Heavens, one can't go around like a conspirator, keeping a finger on one's lips!"

"You have my advice," said Dick. "You are studying that fan very hard, Mr. Zittel."

"I get no hint from it," said the salesman, lifting his brown eyes from the carved and fluted sticks. He passed the fan to Florence. "Can you see anything in it? I will say, with all due

respect to Mr. Phillipse, that Mr. Duane was right in thinking that an expert in that sort of thing would see at once where this fan differed from others. I suppose Mr. Phillipse doesn't claim to be more than an amateur. Florence, let me have that fan, and I'll submit it to some expert in that line and get the story in short order."

"I'm sure you meant to address me, Mr. Zittel," said Dick.

"Well, I suppose it's your fan."

"Thank you. . . . May I have it, Mrs. Duane? . . . Let me have the name of your expert, by all means, Mr. Zittel, when you have found him. I do hope he won't recommend you to me. That would be awkward."

The red-faced man with the mutilated ears whom Dick knew as Scissors Lafetra did not put in an appearance until after dinner. Doctor Wessel and Suydam had stayed for the meal. There had been some sociable drinking of alcohol in homeopathic doses, but when they returned to the living room for coffee, nobody was tight. At that time, ethyl alcohol had not been generally received in society; its too recent association with poor and vulgar people was against it. The salutary sight of sooty and dirty laboring men staggering in a state of acute alcoholic poisoning, after drinking thirty-five cents' worth of assorted

liquors, was still vivid in the minds of their betters.

A car was heard to stop under the porte-cochère, and then the doorbell rang. A maid answered it, but not promptly enough to please the caller; the bell sounded again, and with insistence, and then the door reverberated under a heavy kick.

Dick went into the foyer, meeting the maid, who said to him nervously, "There's a man wants to see you, sir."

Dick switched on the outside lights and opened the door. "Hello, my boy," he said, seeing the man Scissors standing there erect and motionless. "It's good of you to come. Who's there with you?" He went to the steps and distinguished the outline of a man sitting at the wheel in the car. "Drive around to the circle in back, will you?" The driver did not answer, but the car started and rolled obediently to the rear of the house.

Dick turned about, put a hand lightly on the shoulder of the runty Scissors, and was about to utter some commonplace when he was startled by the violence with which the man hurled his hand away.

"Pardon me," said Dick smoothly, deciding to proceed with delicacy until he had what he wanted. "Won't you come in? There are a few

people here, but they're not interested in our affair and we won't bother them."

They went into the foyer. The man walked quickly and jerkily. Conversation in the living room fell off. Doctor Wessel looked out at the pair in the foyer, contracted his brows in closer scrutiny, and rose and went to them. He adjusted his eyeglasses and peered into Scissors' face.

"Typical, isn't it?" he breathed, beaming mildly at Dick. "A rash like scarlatina or roseola. H'm—the beginning of cutaneous desquamation. What a piece of good fortune; I was reading of something similar only this afternoon. I was one of the first psychiatrists, Mr. Phillipse, to use drugs in the treatment of insanity. Most psychoses begin with a depression, and that may go down—down"—he brought his hand all the way to the floor and then up in a slow arc—"down into a melancholia. How to bring them—up!—out of that depression. How to get them out of that introspection, dwelling on themselves. Paraldehyde and hyoscine lifts them, makes them indifferent to their symptoms." He laid his index finger alongside his bony nose and rested his pointed chin on his thumb and looked at the fidgeting Scissors. "Chronic," he said. "Here, I'll show you something else, Phillipse."

He took hold of Scissors' skinny hand and turned it over as if to exhibit the finger nails.

"Let go!" snarled Scissors, snatching his hand away and striking at the psychiatrist.

"There, there," soothed Wessel, backing off and patting the air with fending palms.

Dick followed him. "What seems to be the matter with him, doctor?" he asked in an undertone. "Is he crazy? He acts strangely."

"Well, yes," said Wessel slowly, drawing a hand caressingly over his chin and gazing at the uneasy Scissors. "He'll return to normal when he's had his usual dose of some drug. Chloral hydrate, I think."

"Chloral?"

"He's a chloral drinker, I judge, and he hasn't been able to get his tot for a day or two. Perhaps it's been withheld from him for a purpose—offered to him as a reward, as it were. He's not in the maniac state yet, but he's approaching it fast; he's screwed up tight."

"Come here!" called Scissors to Dick, swinging an inviting arm with uninviting energy. Dick went to him. "Listen," said Scissors in a feverish whisper, clutching Dick's lapels. "Can I talk to you? No, I can't talk to you here. Who are all these people? Are they in the know? Are they your mob?"

"They're all right. What is it? Go ahead and talk."

Scissors whirled about and looked behind him, as if he expected to find that an eavesdropper had stolen up to him. "Come in here, then."

They went into the living room. Dick, scenting something curious, poured a stiff drink of whisky for the tremulous Scissors, and saw it taken down in a gulp.

"Listen," said Scissors in the same unhealthy whisper. "The lawyer told me to come here and show you how I got the silver box. I told him that was all I done here, and didn't know nothing about anything else, see? Well, he got his own game, and what do I want to play ball with him for? There wouldn't be nothing for me in that. When I seen Duane knocked off with my own eyes, don't I get nothing?"

Sound was paralyzed in the room.

"You mean to say," said Dick sternly, "that Garry Duane was murdered, and that you saw it done?"

"I'm telling you," said Scissors. "And where's all the jack I heard about? Don't I get nothing? Look, I ain't got the price of a shot."

He was snatching at his pockets to pull them out demonstratively.

"Scissors," said Dick, "if you can show me

that Garry Duane was murdered, and how it was done, I'll pay you a thousand dollars to-morrow morning."

"Hold a moment, Phillipse," interposed Suydam. Dick looked at him. He was pale to the lips with emotion. "If this man knows anything incriminating, we want to have it, but I must call to your attention that you are weakening the value of his evidence when you offer him a money payment for it. And furthermore, you have no authority, as executor, to pledge the estate——"

"Never mind about the estate," said Dick curtly. "I'll pay the money out of my own pocket gladly. Go right ahead, Scissors."

"Put the chain on the door," ordered Scissors. "Pull down them shades. You don't know what you're mixing in here. Yes, I seen it. I know all about it. I know who done it, and why he done it. But I get out clean, see? No state's evidence for me. I'd get the works right in the chair with my mouth open. Want me to show you how it was pulled off? Never mind about the fan. I picked that on my way down and out, so I wouldn't lose my trouble. Is it K. O.?"

"Agreed," snapped Dick.

"I come in them French doors." He pulled back from the doors, which he had been approaching with a nervous stride. . . . "Lock them doors.

Pull down them shades! . . . I come in them doors, and I went right across here and out that door, and popped up them stairs back there. Come on, and I'll show you how it was, an you'll see if I'm lying. Well, I will tell you right now that there is a winding stairs up there, and a room at the head with books all around, and a big desk. Right through this door."

"Bring the key here!" cried Dick, trying the door to the stairs from the study and finding it locked.

The company was crowding behind the two men. After a short delay, Florence brought the key.

"We've kept it closed ever since," she explained. "Oh, my poor husband. Is it true, Dick? Is it true? Make him show how it was. Oh, no, I can't believe it."

"Quiet, now," said Dick, patting her shoulder as she bent over the lock.

The door opened. The musty air of a closed space came to them as they mounted the stairs.

"Here it was, right here on the turn," said Scissors in his loud and hissing whisper. He had stopped below the landing outside the study. "I give a look around here to spot him, and I seen him in there."

"Very well, you were watching from here,"

said Dick, urging him on. "Now come in here and show us just what happened—where Garry Duane was, and where the man was that shot him, and the rest."

Dick pressed an electric button on the landing, switching on the lights in the study.

Everybody except Lowell Zittel, who had not returned since Florence had sent him hurriedly to look for keys in the coat closet in the foyer, went into the study. Dick racked his memory in later days to discover where each individual had stood during the fateful minute that followed.

He remembered Florence entering and throwing up a window to relieve the stifling atmosphere in the room that, immediately under a shingle roof, had been shut for nearly two months in the heat of summer; she stood beside the window. In the doorway, with the electric switch at her elbow, was the maidservant called Kennedy—a woman of about forty-five and the same servant who had gone to the door in the foyer to admit Scissors Lafetra; this woman had followed the company upstairs unobserved. Nell was standing with Dick, about six feet inside the entrance. Suydam had crossed the room to the farther side, and next to him was Doctor Wessel.

"Show us where Garry Duane was when he was shot!" ordered Dick.

"He was right in this place," said Scissors, stepping in between a built-in bookcase and the swivel chair before the desk. "He was sitting right there in that there chair, and was writing or something, and something dropped, and then he went around here where I couldn't see him from out there——"

"If you didn't see him," cut in Suydam sharply, "how can you know he didn't shoot himself?"

"Didn't I see the book in both his hands when he got the works?" snarled Scissors resentfully.

"Let him tell it, please," said Dick crisply. "Go on, Scissors."

"I can't keep thinking," complained Scissors, putting a steady hand to his head.

They waited in tense silence, and during that interval of stillness in the study they heard a faint tapping in the distance, a light and regular knocking spaced by single seconds, and growing ever louder. It was somewhere outside the room, somewhere beyond the hall; Dick heard now a wheezy panting and a scraping on the stairs.

"He's coming!" screamed Scissors, his eyes set and vigilant with fear. He shrank back, seeking the support of the wall with wide-flung arms.

"Go right ahead," growled Dick. "No—wait!"

He had no eyes but for that dark turn in the

stairs which would frame the approaching threat. And it was in that moment of inevitable distraction that the deafening explosion of a pistol filled the chamber. His ears were still ringing when the lights went out. He bolted for the doorway, hurled aside the invisible form that was there and groped for the switch. He found the button and pressed it, and the room was again brilliant.

All were standing as they had been, except Scissors Lafetra. The body of the man with the clipped ears was sprawled in the swivel chair, in the same position as that of Garry Duane when Dick found it in the midnight of May 21-22. Like Garry, he had been shot through the forehead.

Scissors lay prone, but Dick had a foreknowledge of what he would see ere he sprang to him and sought to lift him.

## CHAPTER VIII

HY did you switch off that light?" demanded Dick furiously of the maid Kennedy, who was just recovering herself from the impact of his headlong charge through the darkness.

"But I didn't, sir," she said with an appearance of shocked surprise. "The lights went out of themselves."

"Too conveniently. Where are you going?"

The last was addressed to Suydam, who was leaving the room.

"I'm going to call the police."

"You wait right here."

"Phillipse," said the Patchogue lawyer crisply, "you forget yourself. I don't appreciate your tone, and I wish you wouldn't resume it. I suggested to you downstairs that you conduct this inquiry in a sensible and intelligent way, and with due attention to legal requirements. Perhaps you are content with the results you have attained, but I certainly am not, and I propose to put the

matter in the hands of the proper authorities. The police will be here at once."

He compressed his lips and strode from the room, passing the man Tap-tap Tony and Lowell Zittel, who had come up the stairs and who were now standing in the short hall behind the maid Kennedy.

Tap-tap Tony swung himself into the room, the crutch that supplied the place of his missing leg reproducing the measured knocking that had been the prelude to the roar of the pistol. His long pale face was composed, grave without poignant concern. He went to his knee beside Scissors; he lifted his light blue eyes to Dick.

"He's got it, sir," he said in a light and quiet voice.

"What are you doing here?"

"Pardon me, sir?"

"The gentleman admitted me." He pointed to Zittel.

"Why did you let him in?"

"I didn't know you'd issued an order against it, Phillipse," said Zittel with a touch of independence. "The man said he had some business with you that wouldn't wait, and I conducted him up here."

"I came up to tell you this man wished to see you, Mr. Phillipse," said the maid Kennedy.

"He was at the door the moment you left the living room, and I hurried up to tell you."

"What business have you with me?" snapped Dick.

"The lady misunderstood me, sir. I may have said something to the effect that I wished to see you, but that was only because this man had gone into the house to see you. My business was really with him."

"And has it been transacted?"

"Pardon me, sir?"

"This man was in deadly fear of you."

Tap-tap Tony heaved a light sigh and looked down at his late associate. His heavy brown eyebrows worked up and down.

"You wait here for the police."

"Yes, sir." The man's accents were mild, almost lisping; Dick felt that he was being mocked and had spoken with purposeful roughness, trying to spur him into temper. He knew that the man was not the timid and inoffensive cripple he would appear; those big and muscular hands had done heavier work, and perhaps more sinister, than soliciting alms. He had the word of the detective who had gone with him into the Chinese restaurant that this self-abasing fellow was a captain among his own in the underworld.

Florence was growing hysterical, asking to be

taken away. Doctor Wessel seated her in a chair with her back to the room; Nell knelt beside her and spoke to her soothingly, patting her hands.

Dick liked the looks of the country police chief who came upstairs with Suydam; in conversation later, he learned that Chief Marvin was a retired sergeant of New York police. Dick suspected something of the sort when the chief, on first entry, seized upon Tap-tap Tony with a look of recognition.

"Hello, what are you doing here?"

"I have been asked to wait, sir. Mr. Phillipse will tell you that I had nothing to do with the job."

"Mr. Phillipse can't say any such thing," cut in Dick. "I'll say only that he was not in the room when the shot was fired. He was on the stairs."

"Did you see him?"

"I couldn't see him. He was around the turn. I'm sure, though, that the shot wasn't fired from that direction."

"Oh, but it was," said Doctor Wessel decidedly. "I saw the flash there. And I heard the pistol fall on the stairs and roll."

"Positively not," said Suydam. "I noticed particularly where the flash came from, and it was between Doctor Wessel and the man who

was shot. The pistol was thrown out the window. I'll swear to that."

"To what?" exclaimed Wessel, bristling.

"Where's the pistol now?" asked the chief.

"Out the window," said Suydam satisfactorily.

"Did you notice, madam, who fired the shot?"

"The lady is blind," said Dick, seeing that the question had been asked of Nell.

"I am sure of the point from which it was fired," said Nell with quiet conviction. "When the pistol was fired, it was right there." She pointed.

"But that's where I was standing," protested Suydam.

"Oh, impossible," said Nell troubledly. "I'm sure, though, that I couldn't be mistaken."

"What did you notice, madam?"

"I can't tell you anything about it," said Florence, trembling. "I was standing at the window, and the shot was fired behind me. I can't explain, but that's where it came from."

The chief leaned out the window into the darkness, peered about, and bent over the sheer house wall.

"Impossible," said Dick. "There isn't a house or tree within a hundred feet. And it's twenty feet and more to the ground."

"Facts first, and then the explanations, Mr.

Phillipse," said the chief curtly. "Maybe you can all agree as to where the man was standing."

"Behind that chair. And he was looking toward the hall."

"There you have it," said Wessel. "And he was shot from the front, where he was looking. I told you that."

"Were you looking at him?"

"Not just then. I was watching the hall because somebody was coming up the stairs—this one-legged man."

"You seem to be pretty well agreed," grumbled the chief angrily. "The best thing for me to do is to take every one of you over to the house and hold you. You ask me to believe that this man was killed in this bright room, with seven people grouped around him, and nobody seen it, and nobody can give a shadow of a reason why it was done?"

"Speaking for most of us, chief," said Dick, "we weren't alert to what went on in the room just then, because our attention had been called very strongly to the stairs."

"Ah, the stall. Now we're getting somewhere. Who stalled? Who was it that got you all to look away while the trick was turned?"

Dick pointed silently to the man on the floor.

"And as for the reason why he was shot, it was

because he was in the act of explaining how Garry Duane was killed in this room last May."

"Now, that doesn't follow, please," put in Suydam, shaking his head. "It is true that he was in the act of making an explanation, genuine or invented, under the impulse of a reward of a thousand dollars offered for his story by Mr. Phillipse. Mr. Phillipse has held to the notion that Duane was murdered, and has probably expressed himself to that effect a number of times; this man came in to-night with a story to fit that idea—and I don't think it fitted it very well, either—and Mr. Phillipse promptly offered him, over my protest, an enormous reward. It's elementary that bought evidence is under grave suspicion."

"Perhaps you can give a motive."

"I can offer a more plausible one. This man admitted that he was here on the night of May twenty-first as a thief, as one of a gang; and he complained he had not had his fair share of the loot. He offered to fasten a charge of murder on someone—and the intimation was that the murderer was not among those present—if Mr. Phillipse would pay him substantially. Now, we have the fact that a great sum of money disappeared from this house that very night. This man, I am convinced, had accomplices with him that night who got away with the cash, and he

conjured up this charge of murder—carefully naming no perpetrator, note—so that he might hold it as a threat over his accomplices' heads and compel them to disgorge. Properly handled, there might have been extracted from him the true story of the housebreaking and robbery."

"Very well," said Dick. "And who of us silenced him?"

"That I don't know. I merely insist that the true motive for this murder be not confused. It makes an enormous difference. If we are to find in this horrible happening a proof that Duane was murdered, we must find the person who did this thing among those who had or could have guilty knowledge of the murder of Duane. But there may be someone among us who can establish a perfect alibi as far as the death of Duane is concerned, but who came into possession of his money on that very night or since, and who is therefore vitally interested in blocking or confusing any inquiry into the disappearance of the money. This man could have shed some light upon the loss of that money, and no good purpose was served by offering him a thousand dollars to go up another alley."

"What does that mean, Suydam?" cried Dick, starting forward.

"Mr. Phillipse," said the lawyer, white and set,

"please control your temper. It seems very short. I've made no charge against you."

"None that I heard," said Marvin, looking at Dick reprovingly. "However, this is all talk. We have first to find that pistol, and I shall search you all, and the room. Anybody that objects will be put under arrest at once. If the pistol isn't found, I'll hold you all until the district attorney gets here. I know he'll hold you, too, so when we go downstairs you better call up your lawyers and arrange bail, unless you want to stay in the coop until Tuesday morning."

"Me, too, sir?" asked Tap-tap Tony. "I can explain fully, sir. I drove this man down here because he was a friend of mine, or rather an acquaintance, and I noticed that he acted queer, like as though he might be hopped. Waiting outside, it occurred to me, in the course of thinking, that the people here might be unaware of his condition and he might do something I'd regret."

"Such as spilling the truth about some job of yours," nodded the chief. "And that brought you in on the fly. I know your history backwards, and you can't rub anything on me. I'd suspect you if you were only within rifle shot."

"But, my dear sir," protested Wessel in his turn, "I have fifty insane patients waiting. Surely you don't need me."

"More than the whole fifty others do, doctor," said Tap-tap Tony with a pleasantness that was not reciprocated in the glance Marvin gave him.

When they were again in the living room, awaiting the arrival of a law officer of the county, Nell asked for the fan. Dick handed her the box; her fingers flitted over its surface like pink moths; she opened it and took the fan out. He saw puzzlement in her mobile face. She spread the fan; her fingers glided over it questingly.

"But, Dick," she said, suppressing her tone with effort, "this is not the fan that Garry bought. Oh, dear, no!"

"Not the fan?" he repeated. "Are you sure?"

"Absolutely, Dick. This is very different in every way. For one thing alone, the other fan was lacquered. And it was quite wonderfully made, while this is as poor and ordinary as a cigar box."

"It was sandalwood, and lacquered?"

"Yes. That was an odd thing about it."

"So that is why the Chinaman Huey Gow refused to show any interest in it. He wanted the true sandalwood fan. What in the world could he have wanted it for? Particularly after he had had it and sold it, knowing what it was. You are quite sure, Nell, are you? But I don't doubt it now."

"And that is why that cunning lawyer gave it to you. He had read your letter and had your secret, and he gave you the false fan so as to gain your confidence. He went there to draw information from you. I don't doubt he sent that unfortunate man here to-day to make a further show of helping you."

"With a design on the money," nodded Dick grimly. "His attitude puzzled me from the first, Nell. He has a villainous reputation, is credited with being an utter rogue and trickster. Unless, Nell, he himself was misled by Scissors."

"We shan't get the true fan from Scissors now," she said glumly. "Dick, this Little Amby is a lawyer, and he can't be a mere criminal."

"I'll go and see him. If it weren't for his black reputation, I could use him; I'm not satisfied with Suydam. He was exceedingly annoying this evening, and I have a mind to cut away from him."

"I wouldn't, Dick. He's maddeningly slow and careful and old-fashioned, but Garry trusted him. This Little Amby won't dare to try overreaching you. Nobody is clever enough to succeed at that."

She said this with a naïveté that made him smile.

"Yes, he's a lawyer, and he has an enormous

practice that he couldn't hold if he robbed his own clients. I'll be on my guard."

"Flo," called Nell, "here's an extraordinary thing. This fan that Dick has isn't the same one at all that Garry bought."

Florence was at the farther end of the room, serving the long-delayed coffee that the maid Kennedy had just wheeled in.

"Not the same?" she echoed, with a surprise that sparkled with anger. Her reprobating glance was directed at Dick. She bounced up and came over.

The representative of the district attorney proved, on his arrival, to be of less drastic methods than Marvin had promised. It was evident that he gave weight to the legally irrelevant facts that the dead man was a worthless character and that his putative slayers were reputable citizens. It is certain that he had seen such a juxtaposition before, and likely that, in his private mind, he diagnosed the case as one of blackmail and was unwilling to see great guilt in the resolution with which someone had cut the blackmailer's knot. He knew Suydam, and took the promises of all who had been in the study to appear before him on demand.

Imbued with a distrust that was not less pressing for his inability to justify it logically, Dick

regretted Nell's public announcement. He saw to it that all notebooks, loose papers and odds and ends that had been Garry Duane's were collected in the safe, and he changed the combination of it privately, notifying only Nell.

## CHAPTER IX



DICK found the engine of his car dead when he tried to start it early on the following Tuesday morning. Having to return to the city at once, he left the car in the Duanes' garage to await a repair man, threw his collapsible English bag of yellow pig-skin into a cab, and went to the Long Island Railroad station at Blue Point. He sat in the smoking car, shook out his morning paper, and lit a cigar.

A paunchy man of about Dick's age, smartly dressed and substantial looking, was sitting across the aisle. He looked at Dick several times, and at last got up and leaned over him.

"Aren't you Dick Phillipse?" he asked, with an engaging flash of even white teeth.

"That's my name," said Dick. "But you have the advantage of me."

"Didn't you go to Columbia University in—let me say it!—in 1903-4-5—along in there?"

"That's right."

"And you played on the baseball team. That

was the team that Eddie Collins played short on. Yes, and I remember you playing football, too. I remember you well. Lowenthal is my name. I was in the School of Mines in Columbia in those days, but I certainly liked to get out there with the gang on South Field and root my head off for you fellows."

"Sit down," invited Dick. "Very glad to see you again, Lowenthal. What are you doing with yourself?"

"Oh, my trade stuck to me, and I've spent my life in exile—South America, China—say, there's a Columbia boy of our time who made good—young Wellington—Wellington Something-or-other. Was minister from China afterward."

"Wasn't he later? I was in the college, but I knew men in the School of Mines. There was Walter Wheeler, a big, strapping Californian and a mighty good sort. And there was Pete Burgholzer—"

"He took up medicine. When I heard of him last he was a doctor in Roosevelt Hospital. Married a charming girl. Well, Phillipse, I sure do love to meet one of the old crowd. I see you're informing yourself on politics. What do you think of this man Cox? They'll win with him—pivotal state, you know. They can't lose New

York, and with that for an ace in the hole——”

Lowenthal was a man who was interested in almost everything and his remarks had an entertaining twist. The hour and a half passed quickly. “Going downtown?” asked Lowenthal when they were in the Pennsylvania Station. “Let me blow you to a cab and keep you out of the Subway this hot morning. I’m going to Bleecker Street, and you might as well keep going the rest of the way.” They followed a redcap to a cab and were soon bouncing southward. Lowenthal got out at Bleecker Street, insisted on paying Dick’s way to Beekman Street, and reached back for a hearty handshake. “Good luck, Dick, old son!” he cried breezily. “Look me up, will you?”

When Dick got to his office in Beekman Street, he alighted, seized the bag that was remaining of the two that had been deposited beside the driver, and was carrying it off when he was impelled to look at it more closely. It was a bag of English pigskin, but it wasn’t his.

“I can’t help that, friend,” said the driver, shrugging. “The other man must have taken yours.”

Dick couldn’t find Lowenthal in the telephone book to inform him of his slight and amusing mistake. Going uptown that night, he stopped at

the hotel that the alleged mining engineer had given as his abode, with a whole-souled invitation to call, but found nobody of the name in the register. It was clear that he had been tricked; upon him, a native New Yorker, had been worked the old familiar switch that tradition reserved for the *rusticus in urbe*. In the bag he found four bulky telephone books that hadn't even the virtue of being up to date, and nothing else.

His loss wasn't serious; a hundred dollars would make it good, excluding the silver fan case. He would have been altogether appalled if he had lost the fan before Nell's discovery. He believed that his bag had been stolen because it contained the fan, and there was a humorous aspect to that. He did not doubt that his car had been tampered with to compel him to take the train so that he might fall into the thievish hands of the supposed mining engineer; the men who had plotted to filch the bag were well acquainted with his past history, but were evidently unaware that the fan they sought was a worthless substitute.

The episode had its darker meaning. It was clear that there were dangerous men who knew of the unexplained disappearance of the Duane money, and who had at least an inkling of the method by which it was to be discovered and repossessed. Their next move might lack humor

and involve tragedy; faces rose in Dick's memory warningly—the face of Tap-tap Tony, the blubbery saffron countenance of Huey Gow the Chinese gambler of Doyers Street, the triangular visage of the formidable little shyster of Center Street whose legal chicane was a bulwark of the underworld.

The cards indicated, however, the necessity of resorting to the little advocate; he stood squarely on the trail that ran back to Garry Duane's sandalwood fan. Dick called Little Amby's office on Wednesday noon, and secured an appointment for two o'clock that day.

He walked up to Center Street after lunch and saw the huge black-and-gold sign of the famous criminal lawyer on the cornice of a dingy little brick house between a metal-working establishment and Sylvester—Silver—O'Reilly's notorious saloon. The saloon was still there, barred and quelled and almost dead, its once flaming life reduced to a furtive and sheltered flicker that was being anxiously cherished against the good day coming when the prohibition that nobody liked—nobody Silver O'Reilly knew—would have blown the jack that had got it in and would be given the rush. On the other side of Center Street lowered the Tombs, whence came the custom of the little brick house; the blue of a keeper's uniform

showed through the bars of the massive gate to the city prison.

Neighboring the Tombs on the north and pseudo-Egyptian in architecture, were the great Criminal Courts. There popped into Dick's head a phrase that he had read in a newspaper—a phrase penned by a judge of the Appellate Division who could be flowery and yet obdurate in confirming the disbarment of another criminal lawyer—"The lawyer's office is the porch of the temple of Justice, but this man made it a den of thieves."

Lolling on the steps of the little brick house—yellow-shod feet crossed, big hand on massive hip, the other hand shoving a gay straw hat forward so that it might scratch the top of a bullet head, the elbow belonging to the scratching hand braced against the doorframe—was a big-framed man who had got fleshy without a struggle. At first sight, this fellow, with his crushed nose and horribly swollen ears, was repellent, but his leering face was full of animal good humor.

"Hello, bug," grunted this man, surveying Dick from under the brim of the straw hat. Dick moved to pass him without answer; the man put out a long and beefy arm. "See me, don't you? Give them a rub."

"Are you in charge here?" asked Dick curtly.

"Now, as to that," said the man, pushing himself away from the doorframe, "it depends on the opposition. But I was until just now. Well, what can we do you for? How about fixing you up with a little law this afternoon—and if so, why? Slip all your worries right in there, bug." He tapped his ear.

"I have an appointment with Mr. Hinkle."

"Oh-h, he got an appointment. Right up the winding stair and buzz Cohen. Tell him Tug Gaffney sent you—that's me."

"Mr. Cohen, you say?"

"No, no. Don't spoil him. Cohen—'Hey, Cohen!' Like that. Try it on Grand Street, bug, and stand back out of the traffic."

The man had bellowed the not uncommon name up the stairs. Dick went up. He emerged into a large and dirty and disordered room about whose walls were sitting people of both sexes, varying in size and expression, but alike in being smartly dressed, perfumed and jeweled. At a battered desk sat a dumpy and yellow-faced man who was the Cohen that was not to be spoiled by being accosted politely—Little Amby's managing clerk.

He was exchanging monosyllables for the lengthy arguments of clerks who were showing him legal papers. He took Dick's card, glanced at it and at Dick, pushed a button, and resumed

his study of one of the papers. A buzzer sounded; he pulled a telephone to him, put the receiver against his ear and held it there with the pressure of a shoulder, cupped a hand over the mouthpiece and whispered into it; his eyes were still on the papers. He was smoking a black cigar and chewing steadily at the same time.

"Go ahead," he said, pointing.

The cheap theatricality, expressing itself in bizarre effects and contrasts, that Dick had come to associate with the master of this den, was again evident in his private room. An indecent indifference to what was mean and ugly showed outside this doorway; within it was luxury without taste. The furniture was massive mahogany, ribbed and edged with polished brass. On the floor of bright wood was a magnificent Oriental rug in blue and gold. There were portraits of stout and great men, framed in red velvet and gold; the solid gold watch chains of the great men were depicted with flattering care. There was a fine bronze of Mercury, god of pilferers, on a bookcase, behind it was a tinted photograph of a prize fighter, across the corner of which was scrawled, To my Pal, Little Amby.

"Hello, Phillipse," called Little Amby cordially, from behind his big flat-topped brass and mahogany desk. "Sit down. Well, what luck?"

"In what way?" asked Dick.

"In finding the fan."

"You seem to keep informed, Mr. Hinkle."

"I try to," said Little Amby comfortably.

"Perhaps you would not mind telling me how you know I am looking for the fan, since you yourself—it seems to me that everything in connection with this matter gets immediate publicity."

Little Amby regarded him attentively. "The fan I gave you was not the right one."

"Very true. And how did you learn that?"

"This is interesting," said Little Amby, frowning. "Do you mean to say you haven't looked for that fan elsewhere?"

"Certainly not. I came here to-day to tell you about the mistake, and to ask your help in recovering the real sandalwood fan—your suggestion, at any rate. You surprise me."

"Suppose you tell me your story, and then I'll give you a side light on it. To be candid with you, we're both surprised."

Dick told him of the happenings at Blue Point on the preceding Saturday. "I'd have told you at once," he concluded, "when I had your office on the wire, but I decided to wait until I could see you."

"To give me the *voir à dire*, eh? That's a Latin

expression, Phillipse, meaning to accuse a man to his face and see how he likes it. So Scissors was shot dead. Where do you suppose that came from?"

"We haven't the least inkling."

"I'm sure you understand that I intended no deceit. My position in the matter needs no apology; I found a client of mine in possession of stolen goods, and, though I saw that he had a fair hearing in court, I compelled him to restore his loot to the rightful owner. I tried to."

"I thank you for that."

Little Amby scratched a match on the metal Buddha that was holding down his loose papers; he lit a Turkish cigarette and pulled the smoke into his shallow lungs.

"Phillipse, I wonder if you appreciate what you're up against."

"I'm getting some unwelcome attention."

"If I were you, I'd have my life insured, and then I'd go ahead with a free mind. I'd pay the premiums, too, until I had that money behind the walls of a bank—if that time ever came."

"What do you advise?"

"I don't wish to press my service, particularly in a matter that is not a purely legal problem. Yours is a business affair—one of negotiation. Well, like every other lawyer who makes a decent

living at the game, I have four fingers in business all the time. Go ahead and play a lone hand if you wish, but, frankly, I don't think you can win, and there's enough money in this to make everybody happy."

"I've heard that you get two thousand dollars a day for your time in court, Mr. Hinkle," said Dick doubtfully. "I don't know how you'd assess the worth of your services in a matter like mine, but in any event, I don't see how I can bind the estate to pay anything substantial."

"Nor anything at all until they get the money. We don't need to go into that now. If I have had a measure of success in the law business, Phillipse, it is because I have conducted my practice rigidly on principle. One of my principles is not to talk price until the money is in sight, and another is not to turn down a good case merely because the client can't put up a retainer. And more than half of my business is done without drawing a summons and complaint—just getting people together like friends and composing their differences."

"I've heard you're not one of these lawyers who stir up litigation," said Dick. He had not heard so, but it was a nice thing to say.

"Indeed, no. There's no money in litigation, Phillipse. Settle out of court; once you've told

your story in court, it's shot. You can't sell it, then, even to a newspaper. For example, you must have read about that Tipley case where they kissed and made up last week. Do you know what I got Nan Tipley for those letters? I'd hate to tell you, but it was so good that a Russian duke fell madly in love with her, and her first husband came on from California to sell her a divorce. There's a good old legal maxim you can tie to that says a bad settlement is better than a good lawsuit. That's a principle with me, Phillipse. I'll tell you what we'll do, Phillipse. We'll work along on this, and we won't talk business until we have something before us to cut up. That's how I do business with a man of your caliber. And now I'll show you that I know already a little something that you don't. Put on your hat and we'll go for a ride."

They went out together, and down to Little Amby's private car that was parked in a side street. "Ma Bonn's," said the master to the uniformed chauffeur. The car crossed to Lafayette Street, hummed northward to Astor Place, and thence westward to Jefferson Market. It stopped before a curiosity shop on whose window was the name M. A. Bonn.

This was not one of those petty shops wherein

poor widows just about make their rent, living in airless rooms in the rear and finding their profit in saving carfare; Ma Bonn was a widow, but a big, full-fed and bossy one. She was behind a counter—a tall and heavy woman in her middle fifties, with the piled hair that had been fashionable in the days when she needed a husband and with a face properly to manage one. She lifted her cold gray eyes from a stock-market report.

“Hello, ma,” said Little Amby. “Meet Mr. Phillipse.”

“Hello, Mr. Phillipse.” She gripped his hand and looked straight in his eyes like a man.

“Ma, you had a fan here,” said the lawyer. “Tell him about it.”

She looked quietly at Little Amby and waited.

“He’s all right,” he said. “It was Mr. Phillipse’s fan, but he knows that a dealer in your line is likely to be imposed on.”

“Phillipse!” she said suddenly.

“The same name as that fellow gave you yesterday. Go ahead and tell him all you know about it. We’re working this thing together.”

“That fan, Mr. Phillipse,” she said, “was brought in here by a gun—that is to say, a crook.”

Little Amby coughed.

"But, of course," she continued, "I did not know it was bent, or I would not have touched it."

"I can vouch for Mrs. Bonn in the highest terms," said Little Amby. "She does an honest business, and if she knew that fan was stolen, you couldn't get it in here if you took down the whole store front. But how is she to know? That's the point. The man who sold it to her was the late Scissors."

"There was a fan in a fine silver case, not sterling but about eight hundred fine. You can see I do a big business in silver. I bought the goods innocently and put them there in the window. They were there about three weeks or so, when in walks a Chinaman. Not one of these laundrymen with his shirt tail out, but looking as good as a bank burglar. This Chinaman wanted the fan, but wouldn't pay for the case, so I sold him the fan for fifty dollars. Some time later Mr. Hinkle here came in and saw the box and bought it for twenty dollars."

"Bought it?" echoed Dick.

"A trade custom, Phillipse," explained Little Amby. "You go to the police themselves when you lose something, and tell them you saw it in a pawnshop, and see if they'll take it from the pawnbroker unless you pay the advances. A

trade custom. I didn't mention to you that I paid twenty dollars. Forget it."

"Was there the letter in the box?"

"No. Can you imagine a gun leaving it there?"

"No, I sweated that out of Scissors," supplied Little Amby.

"And that's the whole story," concluded Ma Bonn, "until this man walks in yesterday and announces that he is Mr. Phillipse."

"What in the world for?" wondered Dick.

"He had the box with him. He also had cards and letters of yours. He said that the fan had been stolen from him—meaning you—and that Mr. Hinkle here had restored it to him. He claimed the fan was an old relic in his family and belonged to his great-grandmother. I called up Mr. Hinkle, and he confirmed the whole story, so I told this party what I've now told you—about the fan going away with the Chinaman."

"You haven't seen the Chinaman since?"

"Before or since?"

"And you have no address of the man who was here yesterday?"

"No. If he comes in again, I'll get a line on him for you."

"Would you know that Chinaman's name if you heard it—Huey Gow? A fat man——"

"Thin as two crackers tacked to a shingle."

"Can you fix the day that he was here?"

"By the book." She went into the rear of the store. "On the nineteenth of last month—a Saturday," she called.

"That complicates it again," said Dick to Little Amby as they left the shop. "Her Chinaman wasn't the man I went to Chinatown to see—one Huey Gow, a gambler. I told you about him? The auctioneer gave me this Chinaman's name, but I got into a row with him without learning anything.

"He wanted the sandalwood fan, but recognized at once that what I showed him was a substitute. I wonder if there is not some way to compel him to talk."

"A gambler? Is he running a game? The police could make him talk."

"That's an idea. I may see Inspector Conlin."

"An intimate friend of mine," said Little Amby. "He'll do anything for me. I'll have a talk with him and let you know."

## CHAPTER X



ATE in July, Nell called on the telephone from Blue Point and got Dick at his office. She said, "We have to thank you for sending that man here to go over our locks. We feel so much more secure now, if it is only because we know you are thinking of us. Dick, I'm not nervous in the least, but this house is getting just a little spooky."

"A man to fix your locks?" he said, with a familiar feeling of being under a covert attack.

"Yes, Dick. The man that was here an hour ago. You sent him. Oh, Dick, you did send him, didn't you?"

"Why, certainly," he lied like a gentleman. "Don't get to imagining things, Nell. I remember him very well. Nell, why don't you ask me out sometime?"

"Come!"

"Oh, yes. You couldn't very well refuse when I make a bid like that. I guess I won't."

"Please, Dick."

"I guess I will. Much thanks. A long weekend? It's been murderously hot here in the city. One look at you would cool me for another week."

"That's not so nice, Mr. Phillipse. But come and visit the icicles anyway, and we'll try to have in some regular girl who will give you a warmer feeling. Please come very soon, Dick."

The day was Wednesday, and he could use his time very well in his own business, but he was uneasy. He could remember speaking to no one about the fastenings of the Duane house. Somebody else must have given the order to the locksmith, if it was given. And, if it was given at all, the locksmith would be told to send his bill to Dick as executor. An intrusive fellow like Lowell Zittel would take it upon himself to do a thing like that, telling no one. Almost anybody might have done it, purposely neglecting to call an unsafe condition to the ladies' attention until it was in process of being cured. He argued with himself, even late in the afternoon when he was going to the garage to get his car, telling himself he was getting jumpy, telling himself that he was going to have his trouble for his pains, and by the time that he was crossing the Queensboro Bridge to the great highway that leads through the south shore of Long Island, he had convinced himself quite.

Driving through the cool of approaching evening, cooled by the breath of the sea when he got out beyond the new construction about Jamaica, he occupied himself with weaving a spell against the powers of darkness; he had his own superstitions, as everyone has when not in a state of exhilaration. He pictured to himself a number of impending calamities that were probable or barely possible; and then he dismissed them, one by one; serenely assured that, since he expected them, they wouldn't happen. The expected, he was mystically assured, never happens. He got to Blue Point at a quarter to eight, daylight-saving time.

"Well!" gasped Nell laughingly. "You do come promptly."

"Always, when I invite myself."

"You must be starved. We haven't a bite in the house for you, except a roast duck and a head of cauliflower and a few candied sweet potatoes. It's just possible that we can scare up an apple pie and a pot of coffee."

"That will be ample for me, Nell. Don't go to any bother. You just come in and sit beside me, and I'll enjoy that little snack as much as I would a loaf of bread and a jug under a bough in the wilderness."

"Shouldn't I sing for you, too? Here's my best note—Kennedy!"

"Paradise," he murmured, holding her hand.

The maid Kennedy came. She said "Good evening, Mr. Phillipse," without enthusiasm. Her manner toward Dick had been almost insolent since the episode in the study; she was a domestic of long standing, with an assured place in the family, and she was resentful. He didn't want her to fall on his neck, but he did like a servant to wear a bright face. She was about him while he was examining, with studied casualness, the fastenings of the windows; she seemed to resent the inspection.

"I go over them every night, Mr. Phillipse," she said tartly, "and you won't find anything wrong. Don't open the windows on this side, please. I've set the alarm on them already. Mr. Garry was very careful and elaborate with his burglar alarms, because he had to leave so much unlocked on account of Miss Nell. But since we're alone, I lock them all tight."

"And very sensible, Kennedy. Which is the door the man that I sent here was working on? I'd like to see what kind of a job he did."

"He spent all of an hour on that front door."

"And well spent, too," he said, bending over the excellent lock. He saw some flakes of black in the outside keyhole. "Was he smoking while he was here?"

"I think he was. Yes, he was."

"I told him particularly not to do that. Nothing is more annoying than to have a mechanic puffing a pipe about the house. I must speak to him about that. This door isn't wired, is it?"

"Well, no, it isn't. We had so many false alarms that Mr. Garry took it off."

Across the door on the inside was a massive chain, with links that would hold a bucking elephant. He couldn't see how that door could be forced against that chain. He scrutinized the thick plates that secured the ends of the chain.

"Let me have a screw driver, Kennedy."

He tried the screws in the plate on the door and found them rigid, with a tremendous grip on the good oak. He directed his effort then to the plate sunk in the door casing; the head of the screw came off at once. He stooped and picked it up, and saw that it was a piece of molded wax.

A thrill that was not entirely pleasureable went through him. He tried others of the six screws, to find them all made of wax but two, and those were new and small.

"A very good job indeed," he said commendingly. "This door is all ready for a house-breaker." Lest she should alarm Nell, he had taken care that the Kennedy woman did not per-

ceive the result of his inspection of the plates.

Florence was not at home when Dick came. He sat with Nell and listened to the radio until it—then an instrument of torture rather than of music—exasperated both of them with its idiotic screaming and banging. At eleven o'clock Florence called from Freeport and said that she would not be home that night. The maid Kennedy brought the news to the two music lovers from the telephone in the pantry; she had taken the announcement with a simple "Yes, madam," and hung up. They went up to bed shortly after.

Dick smoked a cigar by the open window in his room. When the house was quite still, he took a United States Army automatic from the excellent bag that the mining engineer had provided him with, opened his door cautiously, and went downstairs in his stocking feet. He seated himself on an overstuffed sofa that was set at an angle across a corner of the living room.

He told himself that he hoped the housebreaking that had been prepared for would be attempted that night, but his feeling was not more than one part hope to nine of resolution. He certainly couldn't spend an indefinite number of nights sitting up in wait. If the attempt was not made that night, he would repair the fastening privately, notify Marvin, the local police chief, and

go about his business. It is likely that his hope was more intent on that unromantic outcome. But at the same time Dick had his full measure of the stubbornness of an honest citizen defending his right against a lawbreaker.

There was Knickerbocker blood in Dick—Dutch blood—the blood of those stolid and workaday burghers who quenched in blood and mud the power of a Spanish soldiery. There was Yankee blood in Dick; heavy and horny-handed men of his stock, nay-foot, straw-foot soldiers, had rested rifle barrels on stone walls, piled through long decades of inglorious labor, and had looked on broken British regiments. Dick had none of the congenital instability, the nervous weakness, that produces the wanderer, the adventure seeker, the criminal; he was a worker, taking easily the strains of civilized life, stolidly intolerant of any lawless attempt to come between him and his own. He hoped that the present situation would eventuate prosily, but in the center of his being he was secure and immovable.

He heard the clock in the foyer strike twelve, chime the quarter, strike the half, chime and strike again. There was a rustling on the porch outside the window by which he sat—a noise as of dry leaves blowing over the boards. Somebody was at the door.

He arose and got over the back of the sofa and into the triangular space between it and the walls. He heard the chain rattle slightly, and then the smell of earth, the smell of the night, came to him. The door was open. He watched the black foyer; a beam of light appeared out there.

He would not interfere until the attempt was all but consummated. That was the ticklish condition he had imposed on himself. He wanted to know why the attempt was being made. This was no visit of a night prowler, no unmeditated foray. He stooped quickly as the beam swung in his direction. He saw it whisk along the walls. He heard soft-shod feet in the room, and the sibilant sound of the portières being drawn across the entrance to the foyer.

There were several men in the room; he heard whispering. It was distant, and he ventured a look. The beam of light was playing on the safe. Tools clinked. He could make out the forms of three men about the safe. They seemed to know what they had come for, and how to do it. One of them was on his hands and knees on the floor before the safe; he was turning hand screws into the wood, fastening something to the floor. After some minutes, Dick got a clearer look at this object; it was a slender column ending at the floor

in a wide and flat foot, and ascending to a point opposite the handle of the safe. Running from a point just below its top to a point behind it on the floor was a bar whose office was evidently to brace the upright.

There was the rasp of a drill penetrating metal. Dick located the drill between the safe and the head of the upright, and thought he had heard the noise of plugging into the house current. The upright, it seemed, supplied the leverage to keep the drill against the metal it was attacking.

He saw the upright being taken down and removed. Two men began to turn a bar whose middle was pinned against the safe at a point below the bolt case. The procedure was inferred by Dick later, when he examined the ripped plates at leisure. A hook had been passed through the hole left by the drill; when the outer end of that hook was passed through a slot in a bar and pinned, the men had put some manner of jack between the end of the bar—which lay horizontally across the safe—and the doorframe. By turning the jack, they forced the bar away from the safe, compelling it to pull on the hook, and thus pulling awry the plate over the bolt casting; when they could put a rod in and push the bolts back out of their sockets. He could only

guess at what they were doing while he was watching, but he saw that whatever they were doing was coming off in good style. The safe door had been opened.

One of the men, carrying a burden, passed through the room and out onto the porch. Dick knew with approximate certainty that what he was bearing away was the tools.

The next development occasioned him more anxiety. The two men remaining at the safe were gathering up indiscriminately the material they had pulled from it. They were going to carry it all away, for sorting in another place; he could not let them do that. He had anticipated that they would select something—the object they had come for, the thing that he was mortally eager to see. He knew that nothing was there that was valuable in itself; he did not doubt that what they sought was information. He must call a halt.

He rose, revolver poised, and felt for the chain of the electric lamp near him.

He had just found it when there was a snarl at the safe and a pounding of running feet in the room. Dick heard a blow and a gasping cry and switched on the light.

A masked man lay on the floor; a man whose countenance was similarly obscured was bending over him.

"Stop, or I'll fire!" called Dick, covering the man who was still on his feet. He threw a leg over the back of the sofa.

The man did not straighten out of his crouch, did not look at Dick. He swung his body about and ran, still so oddly bent over, into the shadows of the foyer. Dick could have shot him down, but he could not bring himself to pressing the trigger; he knew he could manage the fellow if he could lay hands on him. Dick jumped for the door to the porch to cut off the robber's escape; the fellow turned and fled up the main staircase. Dick raced after him.

He lost a second at the landing on the second floor in discovering which way the fellow had gone; and then he heard him going up the stairs to the top floor. Dick hurried up this stairs, which was completely inclosed and stopped by a door at the second-floor landing.

He did not see the man, nor could he guess in which room he was hiding. He would not quit the stairhead lest the robber watch his chance and bolt down again and away. He returned to the second floor, Nell was in her doorway in her nightdress.

"We had unexpected guests," said Dick. "They haven't all left yet. One is upstairs looking the accommodations over, and there's one

downstairs that I have to make comfortable." He closed the stair door and locked it. "Come here, please!" he called, addressing the maids who had appeared at the end of the hall running back to their quarters. Kennedy came forward. "There's a stranger upstairs. Call me if he tries to get out this way."

"Robbers, Dick?" exclaimed Nell. "Oh, how perfectly thrilling. And don't tell me you have caught two of them all by yourself."

"They put up a terrible battle, too," he assured her, willing to better her opinion of him by fair means or foul.

He ran downstairs, called the police, and went to the fallen robber. The robber was coming to, but he was coming to a changed man, docile, all the deviltry knocked out of him by the terrific blow on the head that had felled him; he lay still when told, and even suppressed his groans. Dick took from his unresisting hand a sheet of paper that was crumpled there.

"You stopped just outside the pearly gates," Dick assured him. "If that cap of yours wasn't so thick, that broken scalp would be a broken skull. So this paper is what he was willing to kill you for."

"I guess you know that yourself," said the robber weakly.

"Who were they?"

"I never seen them before. Don't know them."

When the police came, Dick went with them through the rooms on the top floor, but could find no one. It was not evident how the man had escaped. From any window ledge to the ground was a sheer twenty-five feet or more; and Nell said that he had not taken the shorter jump to a porch roof, because she had been listening for that, and her ears were as sharp as a wild creature's. There were no other stairs by which he might have descended; there was no communication on the top floor between the study, above the servants' quarters in the rear, and the front of the house. The maid Kennedy insisted that she had not left her post for an instant.

"We'll have to increase your taxes, Miss Duane," said Marvin. "Your house is giving us a lot of business. Well, did you lose much?"

"Nothing at all, I imagine," said Nell. "I can't imagine what we could lose, beyond our jewelry; and those robbers must be orphan children, without mother or sister or wife, if they expect to find a girl's rings without searching all over the house. That's how she has to find them herself."

"What do you think they were after?" This to Dick.

"I think they were after that fortune in cash that Garry Duane put away so safely."

"I hope it's found, for the girl's sake," said Marvin pessimistically. "At least it's a nice thing to look forward to."

When he was gone with his prisoner, Dick showed Nell the sheet of paper he had taken from the robber. He began to read it aloud.

"But that can't mean anything, Dick," she interrupted. "That verse is as old as the hills."

"Never mind how old it is," he insisted. "It contains the secret that Garry was going to tell me on that night. He's hidden it there. Garry wrote this out—and why?"

He read the verse aloud to her, scrutinizing the finely printed characters, trying vainly to see significance in their inevitable variations in size and angle and spacing, baffled by the verse's very familiarity:

Let the wealthy and great roll in splendor and state;  
I envy them not, I declare it. I eat my own lamb,  
My own chicken and ham, I shear my own fleece and  
I wear it.

I have lawns, I have bowers, I have trees, I have  
flowers,

The lark is my morning alarmer. So, my jolly boys,  
now,

Here's God speed the plow. Success and long life  
to the farmer.

## CHAPTER XI

 LORENCE came home about eleven o'clock in the morning. She had attended a bridge; the affair had been its grim and fanatical self until the unexpectedly early return of the men from the city, and then things had become jolly and nobody had wanted to take her prize and go home. Doctor Wessel dropped in, too, having heard a rumor of the housebreaking.

He refused to find significance in the potter's verse, even when told that the captured robber had the paper in his hand. Dick had noticed the peculiar quality of the psychiatrist's mind—his admirable skill in fetching conclusions from afar, and his misinterpreting the obvious. He was like ball players whom Dick had known, who could catch anything that was hit at them, and who didn't know what to do with the ball after they had it. Still, it couldn't be that Wessel lacked plain horse sense; he was successful as manager, owner and medical director of his large sanatorium near by.

Dick was not sure that he was discreet, but could not keep him, the co-executor, in ignorance of any development in the estate's affairs. They were legally equal. Dick had a certain moral priority, having advanced the estate, out of his own funds, a little less than five thousand dollars to date.

Wessel sat on the floor and methodically went over the litter that had been pulled from the wrecked safe, while Dick, interested in the mechanics of the job, was studying the wrenched plates of the door.

Wessel spoke to Florence: "Did your husband ever confide to you his suspicion that he was under constant surveillance?"

"Surveillance?" repeated Florence, to whom, it was evident, the idea was new.

"But that wasn't any mere suspicion, doctor," interjected Nell. "I know that his affairs were pried into. Letters addressed to him were opened before he received them."

"How do you know that?"

"He told me so."

"Oh, yes," nodded Wessel.

"But it is true, doctor," insisted Nell, nettled by the knowingness of his tone. "He thought at one time that he was being watched by the Secret Service of the income-tax bureau. He

paid every cent that was due, but because of the way he made his money—in speculation and betting—they couldn't very well check up his returns. I can tell you how he proved that his mail was opened; he found out what ink was made of, and he put those two things under the flap of the envelope, but keeping them apart with mucilage, and then he mailed those envelopes to himself. One of them reached here with an ink-stained flap, and Garry said that showed it had been steamed open."

"Oh, yes," said Wessel in the same superior tone. "Tannin and iron sulphate make ink. So far, good."

"The doctor has his industrial chemistry down pat," commented Dick.

"Very sketchily," said Wessel. "I read handwriting, and it would be odd if I hadn't a special knowledge of ink. I asked the question because of a phrase that occurs here in a letter that Garry wrote his wife but did not post—you were in the Catskills at the time, it seems:

"Flo, here is one of those funny things that have me guessing. Having nothing to do, I sat down to write you; having nothing to say, I stopped writing, and went to reading a book. Then I was called down to the phone, and I marked my place in the book with this letter, and

when I came back, so help me Bob, the letter was in a different place. I guess I must be getting dotty."

"That doesn't mean that anybody was watching him while he was writing," said Florence, taking the letter and tossing it onto the secretary.

"Certainly not. That wasn't my suggestion. But pardon me, please, for looking at the letter at all."

"What do you think of Garry's handwriting, doctor?" asked Dick to make a diversion. He saw that Florence, with her usual unreliability, had exhibited temper.

"May I?" asked Wessel. He reached to the secretary, picked up an unfinished letter and adjusted his glasses. An expression of aversion appeared on his face; he made gestures with the flat of his hand as if he would erase the offending script.

"Who-o-oo," he breathed audibly through touching lips. "No need to study this. My patients write this way—no balance here at all. Secretive and underhanded, and yet temperamental and throwing caution to the winds. People of this type take violent likings, and then love turns to hate. There's a definite looseness in the character of this person. The writer is hiding

something very painful; I'll try to tell you what it is. Come—look there!" He pointed at the page as if he were pointing into a dark pit. "Can you see it? Do you see the arrow? Here's another one—there's another. Who-o-oo. See that queer 'And'—written perpendicularly. There again. Do you see the outline of a flat face? Every writer puts his own symbol in his writing, unconsciously. Now, I'm getting it—wait—wait——"

Dick was watching Nell. He pressed close to Wessel to tell him to reverse himself at once, but when he saw the letter he laughed suddenly.

"That's not the letter you had before, doctor. That's one Florence was writing just now."

"How stupid of me," gasped Wessel, while there was a general laugh at his expense. "It is the case, however, that when I am intent on the handwriting, I don't notice the sense, and vice versa. Let me have the other."

"Too late, Mr. Magician," said Nell gayly. "Everybody's walked out of your tent. But seriously, speaking of being watched, everybody knows what that feeling is. I think I feel it more acutely than do people who are used to depending on their eyes. You remember the other day, Flo, when I told you a man was standing in the door-

way and looking in at us? I just knew that. You remember."

"I remember there was nobody there," said Florence crossly. "If you want to know what such feelings mean, Nell, give Doctor Wessel a sample of your handwriting, and he'll smother you with compliments, as he did me."

"But I did not know it was your writing," protested Wessel. "And the writing shows only the emotions, the impulses, the natural self. I said that the writer was hiding something painful, but the thing hidden may have been a mere delusion, something believed in without evidence—a hallucination."

"That is to say, I may not be a loose woman, but I'm probably insane."

"I'd hate to write you a letter, doctor," smiled Dick. "But tell me this: If you knew a person for a long time and then saw his writing, would you let anything in his pothooks and hangers change your opinion of him?"

"But of course, Phillipse," said Wessel, staring. "It is a science."

The admission contented Dick. It chimed with his conception of Wessel's nature—he would go back on a friend if he didn't like his handwriting—an amazing admission. Dick had a sturdy dis-

belief in graphology, palmistry, and the like! they smacked to him of black art.

Dick intended to go in to New York immediately after lunch, returning the following afternoon for the week-end. He took a walk about the grounds with Nell, and was in a hidden path by the brook that ran through uncleared woods to the bay, when he saw the man cutting the telephone line at the road. He saw the line drop and hang among the trees, but he did not know then that it was the telephone line and supposed the man was about his lawful business as one of a trouble crew. He did not even tell Nell what he saw, nor was he uneasy when she said, "How fast that car is going! Can you see it?"

"Nothing in sight." Then he heard the hum of a hard-driven motor. The car came shooting down the road, reeled into the Duane drive and sailed along it toward the house like a flung stone. It was an open car, carrying five men with caps pulled down against the wind. It pulled up under the porte-cochère and the men piled out and jumped up the steps. One of them was unassisted and moved as nimbly as any of them, although he had only one leg and was driving himself on and up with a crutch.

"Where's the nearest telephone, Nell," he asked — "outside the house?"

"In the barn. What's the matter, Dick?"

"Curiosity. That's on the same line as the house. Nell, I saw the bay from my window, but I didn't notice. . . . How far is it?"

"About a half mile. But it's just about a thousand feet from the house to the boathouse on West Brother Creek. But, Dick, what is it? Tell me, please. You're very nervous."

He had divined instantly the objective of the one-legged man and his band. That objective, in the shape of a single sheet of linen-bond paper on which was printed by hand a familiar old verse, was at that precise moment in the bill fold in Dick's breast pocket; he had not let it out of his hands, and had intended to get it with all possible haste into the keeping of a deposit box in a bank. He saw now that he had made haste too slowly. Knowing his New York as he did, he would have felt like calling out the National Guard to escort him to the train if he had twenty thousand dollars in cash on his person, or a substantial fraction thereof; and yet he had dallied in this remote countryside while he had that in his pocket that spelled fortune to dangerous men. And he had no weapon.

"Garry's boats are lying there yet, aren't they? Thank God for that. Bend over, Nell, and run as fast as you can; don't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid," she said, holding his hand tightly while he warned her against the places where the land and shrubbery fell away from the footpath and exposed them to view from the house.

"It's last night all over again," he said as they ran like affrighted pheasants. "A car crowded with men has just rushed up to the house. I saw that man Tap-tap Tony. They're looking for Garry's paper all right."

They were still nearly a hundred yards from the boathouse on the creek when Dick paused to let Nell draw breath, and ventured to look back through waving fronds.

The men had come from the house and were spreading over the grounds and drifting toward West Brother Creek. This was not sheer ill luck; the grounds were in lawn, even under the trees, except the land lying along the brook and creek, which, being wet and low, had been left in the rough, and afforded cover. The men were shouting to one another in high spirits, and were proceeding with all the confidence in the world, as if there was no law in the land but theirs, no will to stay them. Dick's thoughts went back suddenly to a hectic night in a French hotel following the Armistice, when he, regimental provost sergeant, had been jumped by cognac-maddened

soldiers and felled with a bottle; and there, in the heart of the regimental cantonment, the rioters had taken charge and had been, for a good ten minutes, as jolly and carefree as skylarking laborers on a barge. It would not be a matter of ten minutes here; no sentry would discharge his piece, no guard with bayonets fixed would double in from the South Country Road. Dick knew that the problem before him was going to be worked out with the quantities on hand; at least he did not have the paralyzed astonishment of the average urbanite in the face of an outburst of the lawlessness that is ever brewing under the surface of civilized life.

"Run, Nell," he urged. "They're coming."

They neared the boathouse. This was a one-story frame structure built out over the waters of the creek. Dick knew that boats were moored underneath it. If they could get going down the creek toward the bay in a power boat they could drop their hunters.

But the boathouse was on rising ground which it was a gamble to cross—a gamble that must be made. They scurried across it and into the open doorway of the shelter. Dick looked out a salt-bleared window. One of the men was only fifty yards away, and was running directly to the boathouse. In his hand was a revolver; he shouted

as he came. He would arrive in a matter of seconds, and the others close behind him. It was idle to hope to get down the steps to a boat in time, and start a cold marine engine, and nose the boat out through the gate in the paling and into the creek. They wanted minutes, not seconds.

"Too late," said Dick. "They have us." He threw a look about him. He was looking for a nook or cranny into which to throw the bill fold, though he knew that if he were found there, the place would be adequately searched; and he did not doubt that he himself would be given the choice between revelation and death. He was pretty sure that he would reveal.

"Tell them I've gone toward the road," he said quickly. He leaped and caught a rafter, swung himself up and stretched himself along some stored spars and sweeps. A rolled sail bulked alongside him. He could not be seen from the floor, but he would be found quickly if the place were searched for him. There was just a chance that he had not been seen entering the boathouse; he had crouched low, while Nell had been almost erect.

The greeting shout of the man he had seen running was reassuring. "Here she is!"

Dick heard the other men enter. And then the dry voice of the one-legged man, all its silky ve-

neer gone, cold and deadly: "Where is he? That"—Dick's fear fell away from him oddly when he inferred that a weapon had been thrust against Nell—"is a gun."

"He went toward the road," she said tremulously. "He left me by the brook. He told me to come this way so that you'd follow me."

"I'm telling you I saw him up that way," said another man.

"Look around here, Bull. Come on, you. Up there, and rouse him out. Don't lose time chasing him; give him the works."

They were going. They were gone.

"How far off was he when he left you?" growled the man who stayed.

"Quite a way," said Nell. Her voice had sunk to a whisper.

Dick heard the man moving about. The lid of a storage locker creaked and fell with a bang.

"Blind," grumbled the searcher. There was a silence of several seconds, and then the man shouted: "All right, boys, I'm coming!" His feet pounded the floor and Dick knew that he had run from the boathouse.

He looked over the top of the sail. Nell was standing below him; her mouth was open and her head was tilted in a listening attitude. She spoke just as Dick saw the man reappear in the door-

way. His flight had been a feint; he had stolen back over the soft turf to observe her.

"Dick," whispered Nell. And then more loudly, "Dick, they've gone!"

"So that's how you're gaited," growled the man triumphantly; and he stalked into the room and up to the terrified girl. "He's here, is he? Where is he—understand me?"

His hand, contemptuously open, met Nell's cheek in a stinging slap.

Dick did a shoulder roll out from among the spars. He didn't care how he got to the floor, if only it was the quickest way. He landed asprawl, which saved his life for the time being, for the thug fired point-blank.

Dick bounced at the man like rubber, swinging his right fist with every ounce of his strength. The full blow did not land, but there was enough of it and to spare. The man, dodging, took it on the side of his head; his arms flew apart, and he fell. The pistol sailed neatly through a window and into the creek.

Dick was off balance after that first furious stroke. The thug had time to turn over and climb to his feet. He was as big as Dick, and fifteen years younger, and his chosen way of life had not yet sapped his strength. He was no dub with his fists either; the roll of the head, that had saved

him from taking Dick's blow frontally, meant something. He was hurt, jarred, but a few seconds accorded him to shake off his daze would have assured a fight worth seeing. He did not get those necessary seconds.

Dick was on him, all over him, hitting with both hands like a kicking mule. He wanted to kill the fellow right there on the floor; he wanted to kill him with his fists. He had seen the red mark on Nell's white cheek. He hated the man with passion, was revolted by him as by something obscene and inhuman. Dick was wrong to feel that way, and was unjust to the thug, who had done no more to Nell than he would have done to his own sister or wife, but Dick was blindly prejudiced in the premises.

The thug fought back, and without shouting; he had no time to waste in calling out. They were fighting like wild beasts, all skill of fence gone in the mad whirl of battle. The thug reeled back over the floor, driving his fists in a despairing effort to beat back the maniac who was Dick, whose blood lust was plain in his ravening eyes. The thug's eyes rolled up and his head swung aside, but not of purpose now. Dick did not set himself for the finishing blow, because his every blow was starting from his planted feet. His fist smashed against the thug's jaw, and down the

man went. Dick stumbled over him and pulled up sobbing for breath—sobbing with unslaked fury. He saw the man on the floor; he pulled himself together, glanced about for the pistol in vain, caught Nell's hand and hurried her down the open steps to the water.

"Which is the boat for us, Nell—which?"

"The Miss Bayport is the faster by far, Dick, but I think it's out of order. Better take the cruiser."

"Wait here," he ordered curtly, pulling the cable of a raised deck cruiser some thirty feet over all. He saw the sea sled that she called the Miss Bayport, but he had no time to lose in tinkering with a high-speed marine motor. He climbed onto the cruiser's cabin, ran aft, jumped down into the cockpit and switched on the heavy-duty motor. It responded at once—as pleasant an ugly noise as Dick had ever heard. He eased the boat by the steps, gave Nell a hand into the cockpit, and turned the nose of his craft out into the creek.

"Down, Nell—quick!" he cried, stepping the engine up to full speed. He had caught a glimpse of men running on the ground before the boathouse. He could not watch them; could not leave the wheel nor stoop. A bend in the creek was before him, and he had to stand bolt upright to

look over the cabin and steer a course. Pistols were being fired right beside him, it seemed; there beside him was a splintery hole in the polished oak. He made the turn, and was in the shelter of the bank and the tall salt grass; the tide was out fortunately, and the creek was sunk between its banks. The boat was making its honest and reliable ten miles an hour toward the wide Great South Bay.

"Have we water here, Nell?"

"Lots. Over six feet, anywhere between here and the bay. We won't go aground. Oh, Dick, we're safe! Wasn't that frightful? When I heard you fighting back there, I felt that I would go mad. But, Dick, I wasn't afraid."

Dick rounded another bend, sending the black waters swirling over a mud flat. He bent an ear to his engine; there was a sound he could not account for. Nell told him what it was; her tone was informative in itself.

"They've started the Miss Bayport."

"How much does she do, Nell?"

"Thirty miles."

Dick caught a glimpse of the bay over a waving green flat. The nearest boat was a half mile away, and that was only a tubby sloop that probably housed a water tramp—no help there. He disregarded the two baymen who were tonging

clams from small boats. And it was more than a mile to Bayport or Blue Point.

"They'll come up on us as if we were hooked to the bottom," he said. "I have an idea—can you swim?"

"No, Dick."

"Just the same, Nell, you and I are going to step off this boat into the water right away. Will you do it?"

"If you will with me, Dick. Must we?"

"Our one chance."

They were in the straightaway to the open water of the bay; he lashed the wheel. They would leave the boat in the middle of the creek; he could not risk bringing it close to the bank, lest it nose into it. And the banks, cut by the swift creek, were sheer. There, ahead, was a shelving spot where a runlet emptied into the current.

"Come, Nell." He caught her hand and helped her to the gunwale. "Hold your breath when you hit. One—two—" They were in the water, under it, up to the surface. "Good girl! Breathe now."

It was only twenty-five feet to the shelving shore—fifteen, and they found footing. They heard the snoring of the Miss Bayport; at any moment she would skid around the turn behind there. They struggled to the shore, across the

flat and into the high and dense salt grass.  
“Down—down flat!”

It seemed a long time before the Miss Bayport appeared, and it was probably all of four minutes. Dick remembered thankfully that the craft was a sea sled, a scow-shaped boat that picks up speed slowly; the motor had probably been idling while the men studied their vessel. And meanwhile the cruiser was driving out into the bay, steering as straight a course as if a smart skipper was at its wheel. It was over a thousand yards away when the Miss Bayport came around the bend. Dick hugged the moist black earth.

It was not making more speed than the cruiser when it passed Dick and Nell, but now, with the open water before it, it began to climb. Higher rose its snub bow, higher. It was beginning to plane, getting up out of the water in which the cruiser wallowed along. Its speed mounted; it rushed toward the cruiser.

“Now, Nell.” They jumped up and scurried for the house. The five men were in the Miss Bayport, closing on the cruiser.

The boats did not return, not either of them. Baymen brought them back in the afternoon, having found them unmanned, and thinking they had found evidence of a double tragedy.

Doctor Wessel was gone in his car to bring

help. Florence was not greatly excited. "They did no harm here, except to charge around a bit," she said. "They saw you from a window almost at once. No, I won't leave this house, Dick; this is my home, and I shan't be frightened out of it. And where would we go?"

"I feel sure that you won't be disturbed again, for that matter," said Dick. He tapped the bill fold containing the precious and inscrutable rime; the paper had not suffered because of his immersion. "This thing will be behind a foot of chilled steel in my safe-deposit box before three o'clock. It will stay there, too, if we have to call the United States Army and Navy. We'll tell the world where it is, too, for fear that the grape-vine that disseminates information about our private affairs may not be working perfectly. And then I'll see Inspector Conlin about this Huey Gow."

"I'll stay if Flo wants to," said Nell. "Though to be quite honest, I'd love to go to some secluded spot like Forty-second Street and Broadway and settle down for a rest. It may be dull and boring there, with nothing interesting to do, but I don't want any interest in my life for a long time now. I love Blue Point, but it's too darned crowded with excitement."

Dick was most uneasy of the three. He prevailed on them to go back to New York with him for a week-end of summer matinées, supper shows in smart restaurants, churchgoing with pomp and circumstance.

## CHAPTER XII

 A BONN told you, eh?" chuckled Inspector Conlin. "I'll tell you about that lady, Mr. Phillipse; you can believe almost anything she tells you, providing it agrees with what you know for certain yourself."

"You don't flatter her," said Dick. "You don't like her so well."

"I'd like her a lot better at Auburn. She's had a long run, but she'll get there. That woman is a professional receiver of stolen goods. There isn't any doubt but that she knew that fan was stolen; she probably wouldn't have bought it if it wasn't—she would think there was something queer about it."

"Mr. Hinkle spoke very highly of her."

"She always spoke very highly of him," said Conlin.

Dick caught the sardonic grimace of the old policeman. "Mr. Hinkle tells me that you and he are close friends."

"Why not? He has a big reputation, and any-

body would be proud to know him, presumably. And being that he is a lawyer, he is a man of good moral character, presumably. However—and although he's a great lawyer and I'm only a common policeman—we're not as thick as he lets on. There's a great many people anxious to spread around that they're my friends; I can make five thousand dollars for being seen to shake hands with any one of twenty men in New York—no favors—only a shake. Still and all, I don't see what good it does to be on the level when reputable citizens like yourself, Mr. Phillipse, take it for granted that I got secret influence with crooks and gamblers, Chinese or any other kind."

"I didn't mean anything to that effect."

"You did too. I want you to know that there's no secret wires running out of this office to Chinatown, or Forty-second Street either. Any man in New York can snap his fingers in my face if he behaves himself, and if he don't he gets the rap. I got no influence with those kind of people at all, Mr. Phillipse, because they don't do business if I know it. And if I don't know it, they should worry about me."

"I so understand, inspector," said Dick, meeting fairly the challenging gaze of the chief of the detective bureau.

"Well, since you understand that thoroughly"

—Conlin pushed a button—"we'll have in Mr. Huey Gow."

A door opened, admitted Huey Gow, and shut behind him. The Chinese gambler looked blankly at Dick, and then turned his expressionless gaze on the inspector and awaited his pleasure.

"Huey," said Conlin complainingly, "I got some bad reports on you. What kind of a game is this you're running down in Doyers Street?"

"Fan-tan, sir. Very nice game for nice people. No noise; no fight. If police-a-man come up to the watchman, he can come and look in. Never the watchman stop the police-a-man; it is a lie. Who tell you this? Hing Chu that got a gambling run on Mott Street? Everything very nice; everybody got money to go home—to Paterson, to Stamford, to Bay Shore, to Linoleumville, to Fort Lee, to Rockville Center—to everywhere. It is not for stopping the police-a-man; it is for the Hip Sing. If the watchman sing out, 'Hey, shut the door!' that is for me to know——"

"Don't try to talk me out of it. You're getting rough, and the next thing you know, something is going to drop in Doyers Street. I believe in letting people alone while they don't annoy other people, but I won't stand for rough stuff. You and your friends ganged a fellow down there a few Sundays ago, and tried to kill him, and this

gentleman saw you and saved the man's life."

"No, sir, it is I saves the man's life. Maybe I hit the man, but I right away sorry. He lay down to get rest, for his body all over hurts painful. Best way to get a Chinese doctor or an American doctor to put medicine on him. I do not know what he like, so first thing I get a Chinese doctor in Bayard Street to put medicine—"

"Yes, yes, you worried yourself sick over that man, I'll bet."

"Not sick."

"Very well, Huey, you're right. Keep on going as you are, and see where you head in. The first thing you know, you're going to look up in the air and see the Queensboro Bridge. You heard, now. . . . What did you want with this gentleman's fan?"

"I didn't want this gentleman's fan."

"Hurry up."

"There is Chinese gentleman—very fine rich man—want this fan, not I. I nothing but poor gambler. I can't do nothing; I can't help nothing."

"You were getting it for this very fine man?"

"If he will give me five hundred dollars."

"Naturally, you wanted sweetening. Well,

Huey, who is this very fine man and what's his lay? Where does he hang out?"

"I don't know this."

"What was good about that fan that he'd offer five hundred dollars for it?"

"I don't know this. This fan belong to Jacob Koo, a very fine Christian gentleman of China. But it is very sad to relate, he is chopped up by hatchet men and so he cannot pay the rent. For this I sell a few very little things belonging to him for a very few dollars to pay the rent. So comes this very fine Chinaman and he want Jacob Koo's fan, but it is sold and nobody can tell about this. So he will give me first one hundred and then five hundred dollars for the fan. And so comes this liar to me and says 'Give ten dollars for bringing you the man what have this fan in a silver box. No one else can do.' So I give this liar ten dollars."

"And you figured you'd bought his life and you wanted it. We're not asking you about that. Our party is the very fine man who's willing to pay the price of a high-class murder for a fan."

"But he don't want a fan no more. He got a fan."

"What did he want it for before?"

"It is a talk fan. Everybody knows this."

"You'd be surprised how dumb some people

are. A talking fan, eh? What does it talk—Chinese?"

"Chinese, too. American, French, English, Cuban, Chinese, Spanish——"

"A pretty smart fan. Well, where is this man?"

"You like see him? It cost money, sir."

"Where is he—in a dime museum? This is the gentleman wants to see him, and he isn't paying you for it either. Get that out of your nut, Huey. I know you wouldn't pull your own brother out of the river if he didn't throw you a quarter, but this time you're working for charity. So put on your hat and go along with Mr. Phillipse and show him the very fine man who wanted to buy his fan."

"All right, sir. But not pretty soon. Maybe six o'clock."

"When will it be convenient for you to go with him, Mr. Phillipse? Don't consider him at all. You know what he's going to do between now and the time you meet him; he's going to scuttle around and try to sell you to somebody. He'll go straight from here to his very fine man."

"No, sir, never will I go straight. I give a word of honor."

"Eight o'clock would be more convenient," said Dick.

"Eight o'clock it is then," decided Conlin.  
"Huey, be at Mr. Phillipse's house at eight o'clock.  
Here's the address."

And at eight o'clock sharp Mr. Huey Gow was announced at Berkeley Chambers. Dick went down to the main hall and found the Chinese waiting.

"Shall we take a cab?" asked Dick.

"It is not far, if you do not like to come in a car," said Huey Gow. "It is on Riverside Drive—not far."

They walked across West Eighty-fifth Street and then southward on the Drive, and they had not proceeded three hundred yards from Dick's own door when the Chinese said, "Here it is," and led the way into an old ten-story apartment house. Huey Gow had himself announced, and was asked by the operator to get on the wire, by request of the individual upon whom Dick and he were calling. After gabbing animatedly and at length in a language that was Chinese to Dick, he apparently secured permission to go up to the apartment. They took the elevator to the tenth floor and were admitted by a white servant girl.

She left them in the foyer of the apartment and went off. They sat there for five minutes in silence. It was a large apartment, judging by the size of the foyer, and rented, it was likely,

for something like four hundred dollars a month. It seemed to Dick that the furniture was poor and mean, and that there was not half enough of it. The foyer was equipped with an ordinary dining-room table and six cheap dining-room chairs. Dick was still looking for the Oriental luxury which he, for no good reason, had expected to see, when his host entered, went to Dick with a bright and pleasing smile and shook hands.

"He is Mr. Wong Get," said Huey Gow; and Mr. Wong Get looked at him with patient kindness, as a polite man who did not care for dogs in general might look at the dog of his friend. He was not as thin as Ma Bonn's "two crackers tacked to a shingle," but he was thin. He was of average height, but small-boned, with a Size 13 neck and a small round black head. The round cheeks and the shining eyes and the smile that showed heavy white teeth made him look doll-like. He was an intelligent and cultured gentleman of about Dick's age, and, at a guess, a graduate of an American college. His complexion was ivory suffused with pink. Dick had known such men in the university—men who differed from the coolie class as much as one European class differs from another—and was prepared for Mr. Wong Get's excellent English.

Wong Get held the door of a room for Dick,

closed it against Huey Gow, and waved a thin, small hand at a morris chair.

"You have a fan belonging to me, I am told," said Dick bluntly.

"Pardon me," said Wong Get. "I do not think so. Of what fan do you speak, Mr. Phillipse?"

"A sandalwood fan given me by Mr. Garret Duane. He bought it, I understand, at an auction sale of articles that had belonged to one Jacob Koo. The things, including this fan, were put into the auction room by your countryman outside."

"Had he a right to sell what was of Jacob Koo?"

"Certainly. By the law of this state, as it has been explained by my attorney, Huey Gow had a rooming-house keeper's lien on the personal property of Jacob Koo, and was entitled to sell it and get his money. Mr. Duane bought it legally and gave it to me, and it was stolen."

"Ah, but suppose that the fan did not belong to Jacob Koo," said Wong Get smilingly.

The suggestion was new to Dick, and troubled him. Wong Get refrained from dwelling on his embarrassment, and said frankly: "I have the fan you are looking for, Mr. Phillipse. When I sought it, some time ago, I went to Huey Gow and offered him at last five hundred dollars for

it; it would have been unwise to offer more, and perhaps I offered too much. He did not tell me about the auction room but said he would find the fan for me. Some time later I learned that the fan was in a curiosity shop near Jefferson Market, and I went there and bought it."

"I might waive my title to the fan and buy it from you. Will you sell it to me?"

"Impossible."

"I won't quibble about the price. I must have that fan."

"Impossible, Mr. Phillipse. I am very sorry, but that cannot be. The fan is not now for sale—not for one hundred thousand dollars—not for any sum."

"But what is the thing's peculiar value?" said Dick, somewhat heatedly. "I can't think that it is of great value to anybody but me."

"You do not know the office of that fan, Mr. Phillipse? Everybody knows that. It is no secret. Huey Gow knows it, and many others."

"Huey Gow wouldn't tell you the time by the Metropolitan tower clock without being paid for the information."

"Very amusing! Yes, he is a low fellow. It is a talking fan, Mr. Phillipse."

"I heard that. What does it mean?"

"It is to convey secrets. Here in New York

I represent some estimable people in China; you will not inquire who they are. We will say, for instance, that they are merchants. They wish to tell me something or my very self alone, and they send me a philosophic maxim of Lao-tse, or a recipe for making taffy candy, or something equally admirable in itself, but not startling to curious men."

"A verse in praise of life on the farm, perhaps."

"Perhaps—and I read the secret message with the sandalwood fan."

"But how?"

"My people in China have a print of this fan, precise to the last piercing and least crenelation. The fan has twenty or more sticks, or blades, and each blade is pierced in an arbitrary design; it is a very old fan, and handmade, and there is not such another in the whole world. There was just such a one, long ago, and then it supplied the place of the print that my people have now. Understand how such a print was made. The fan was opened to its fullest on a sheet of sensitized paper—the ordinary paper for printing photographs—and so was reproduced faithfully a print of every little hole of the hundreds in the blades of the fan."

"I think I see now!"

"My people then place on the print a sheet of tracing paper or some thin white paper, and through the paper appears the design of the fan. They write on the spots, corresponding to the holes in the fan—a letter here, a letter on there, spaced irregularly—until the message is complete. On the white places, corresponding to the material of the fan, they write what they will to mislead, making of the whole composition a pleasing sentiment or some worthy advice upon the ordinary affairs of life. Everyone may scrutinize; no one will read the secret if he have not the sandalwood fan, to open fully, to place on the composition—to see what letters are not covered. One needs light behind the paper to read readily. By day, one may place the paper against the glass of the window; by night, such a glass table top and a light held below it. Is it clear to you? I do not betray a secret to you. Such a method of communicating private matters is known in China by those who would be posted."

"Clever," said Dick. "Your people, Mr. Wong Get, have gifts that are all their own."

"It is all a matter of being posted," said Wong Get slightly. "Here in America, Mr. Phillipse, you have so very many experts, and they announce that they know all, and people believe this, even when they hear these experts quarreling together

like a buyer and seller. I have read in an American book that no secret writing can hope to escape the all-seeing eye of the anointed expert. This is absurd. If a unique object is needed to read, the expert cannot read. Do you know of string writing? That is not Chinese, but Greek—ancient Spartan. One winds a string about a stick, making the coils sit close, and one writes on the string. One unwinds the string and sends it to his friend, who will wind it again on just such a stick, and read. Can anyone read the string without the stick? No, he cannot. There are many such. Here is a secret writing of India; blow into a water tumbler—hah—puff! . . . But I do not wish to bore you.”

“I’m really immensely interested. I happen to have a secret writing of my own that I am anxious to interpret. From what I know now, it is evident to me that it is to be read with the assistance of the sandalwood fan. Can’t you let me have it long enough to use it to read the writing that interests me, and I’ll give you any pledge you may require that I shall guard it and restore it to you at once, and be satisfied to debate the question of ownership later?”

“You must see that I can’t let it from my possession, Mr. Phillipse. It is not that I do not greatly wish to oblige you, but you will not insist

that I resign into your hands the lives of my people in China. It is so serious."

Wong Get stared at the carpet underfoot in reflection.

"Is it so important to you, Mr. Phillipse?"

"It is of the greatest importance. The message is from Mr. Garret Duane, who is dead. It seems that he used that fan to send me a message, and the fan was stolen before it came into my hands. You may judge of its importance when I say that the unfortunate fellow who stole the fan was murdered in my presence because he was about to divulge some information bearing on the affairs of Mr. Duane."

"You shall have the use of the fan," said Wong Get.

"You'll let me take it?"

"No, not that. I didn't say that. I said that you shall use the fan. You shall use it here. You shall bring here the writing that you wish to interpret."

"That creates a certain difficulty. Candidly, I should fear for my life if I had that paper on my person. There are criminals of the most desperate type who have learned somehow that this paper is the key to a hidden treasure. I have put the paper in the vault of my bank. It may be, though, that the matter can be arranged. I can get in

touch with the police and get an escort in bringing the paper here. That makes me seem very timid, which I am not—not without good reason. My life was attempted recently because I had that paper with me, and only sheer luck saved me. Secrecy is of no avail; this murderous crew seems to be apprised of my every movement. My best policy is to act openly. I'll go to the police and have them accompany me to the bank and here."

"Oh, no," said Wong Get decidedly. "If you come here, you must come alone. It is unfortunate, Mr. Phillipse, and you may think me harsh, but it cannot be helped. If my interests only were involved, I should not hesitate to trust you, but I must not trust anyone with the lives of my friends. It means too much to China. You are not the only man, Mr. Phillipse, who walks under a sword. You must come here alone and unarmed."

"At least the fan is here?" demanded Dick, pondering.

Wong Get smiled and spread his hands quaintly. "If you will tell me when it pleases you to come, the fan will be here."

"You ask me to do the thing of all things that I would avoid—to bring that writing and that fan together except under the most carefully controlled circumstances. It is likely that nothing

will happen and that my problem will be quietly and instantly solved, but I feel as if you were asking me to touch fire to gunpowder. Unarmed!"

"Unarmed," repeated Wong Get, rising and bowing slightly. "Will you please to come?"

"I'll tell you, though, that I'll take every precaution to guard that paper as far as your door."

"I do not quarrel with that. It is with regret that I impose such a condition on you, but you should see that it is I who requires protection. Were I not minded to oblige you, I should refuse to talk to you about the sandalwood fan at all—laugh it off, as it were. You must see that."

"And I appreciate it, sir. Will the afternoon of to-morrow be entirely convenient to you? Let us say, at two o'clock, then. That gives me time to restore the writing to the vault."

"You will not need it again, unless for a souvenir, if it is to be read with the fan. To-morrow at two o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Phillipse."

An abstracted look came into Wong Get's velvety eyes; there vanished from his round face the conventional simper with which he was bidding Dick good-by. With an agility that Dick had not supposed him capable of, he sprang to the door and snatched it open.

If he expected to find Huey Gow with an ear

glued to a crack, the gambler was altogether too honorable or too quick. Huey Gow was sitting across the foyer, with hands folded comfortably over his stomach, with eyes closed, snoring softly and soothingly.

## CHAPTER XIII

ICK had a talk with Little Amby about Wong Get's proposal.

"I'll come, Phillipse," said the lawyer. "You intend, no doubt, to hold the fan when once it is in your hands, and to call in the police and have this Wong Get arrested under Section 1308 for buying and withholding. Do that, and I'll put the scare in him. He'll be mighty glad to give you the fan and to pay me for my trouble. We'll badger him!"

"I couldn't think of doing anything like that."

"Surely, Phillipse, you're not thinking of keeping your word with him, and going there alone and unarmed with that paper? Why, he'd have you at his mercy. Oh, no, I would never let any man get me that way, not if he swore on a stack of Bibles. Why should he keep his word when you would have nothing to trade with? Oh, I'm a great believer in being honorable, and I'll take a man's word to a reasonable extent, and so long as he is taking mine at the same time; and then it is only a matter of seeing that he does not beat

me to the punch. Well, ring me after, will you?"

Dick himself felt insecure, but he resolved to go through with his arrangement. At one o'clock he left Beekman Street and went to police headquarters and talked to Conlin. The inspector sent a plain-clothes man to the Mauritius Mortgage & Trust Company with him. Dick took the precious paper from his safe-deposit box. He walked out into crowded Park Row and stood beside the detective at the curb and awaited a taxicab.

On the sidewalk beside him a street faker was exhibiting mechanical toys. The sidewalk was none too wide already, and the faker was compelling the traffic to detour so as to avoid stepping on him and his idiotic novelties. While he chanted his ballyhoo, his eyes roamed ceaselessly in search of the man on the beat. Now he bent over and plucked his goods from the walk, slammed the lid of his valise on them and darted off into the crowd.

And it was just then that a pretty blond girl seized Dick by the arm and collar, and screamed, "Police—police!"

"What's eating you, lady?" asked the detective, while Dick stared at her in wonder.

"This man took my pocketbook! Look! Right out of my hand bag. He pulled it open and

grabbed it and passed it to another man, who ran right away with it. Police!"

"Pickpocket, eh?" said an elderly gentleman, coming manfully to the rescue of beauty in distress. "Took your wallet, my dear? Have him arrested."

"You mind your own business," said the detective rudely. "There's no water here for your car. Do you know what that shield means? I'm an officer and this man is with me, and I know he didn't take anybody's pocketbook. For that matter, I don't think there was any pocketbook taken at all."

"But I saw the man running off with the wallet," protested the gentleman.

"So did I—and I—and I," chorused a volunteer jury.

"Anyway, the girl says he took it, and she wants to make a charge against him. If you're an officer, you got to run him in."

"You're making a charge against this man?" demanded the uniformed patrolman, shouldering into the center of things. "What are you charging him with?"

"He pulled my leather," said the pretty lady—"I mean, he took my pocketbook. I hope to die, officer. I was walking right here and going to get my lunch from where I work in a Wall Street

broker's office, and somebody knocked my hat. I put up my hands to fix my hat, and right away this man crowded his shoulder under my elbow and held it up, and pulled open my bag and lifted my pocketbook, and give it to a man who blew with it—I mean, he ran away. I seen him, officer, with my own eyes."

"This is a game," said the detective, showing his shield to the uniformed man. "This gentleman is with me."

"And you didn't see him do it," cut in the blonde. "Well, one witness that seen him do it is worth two that didn't; I know that much law. And it ain't on my say alone, either; this party right here seen him—didn't you, dearie?"

"Well, yes, I can say I did," said the elderly gentleman, taking her arm and drawing her under his protecting wing.

"He'll have to come around to the house," said the patrolman.

"Then let's go and get it over," growled the detective.

"Come on, everybody," invited the lady.

"Listen, if you want a parade, where's your permit?" objected the patrolman. "I'll take anybody's name and address, but only this gentleman is going along."

"Here's our cab, Mr. Phillipse," said the de-

tective. "I don't suppose you want to walk down Nassau Street with this dame tagging after you. Let's ride."

They all got into the cab that the Central Office man had hailed and rode to the Old Slip station house. It was a tight squeeze, but the lady was obliging enough to sit on the elderly gentleman's lap, making room. They lined up before the police lieutenant on the desk; the lady repeated her story with embellishments, and was heartily supported by the elderly gentleman, who, developing as witnesses always do, had become a fervent partisan of the side that his testimony helped.

"Absolutely false," said the Central Office man.

The lieutenant nodded slightly and shrugged his shoulders. "Why don't you take him right over to court and have him turned out?"

"We'll do that," said Conlin's man.

"But I can't spare the time to go to court just now," protested Dick. "I have a very important appointment."

"But I'll have to send you over to court, anyway, sir," explained the lieutenant. "I got my opinion, but that don't give me a right to turn you out. You'll have to go over and give bail if you don't want to wait around and get the charge dismissed."

A civilian strolled out of the wardroom—a

wide and generously curved man in a shiny blue sack suit. A cigarette, looking like a pin stuck in a map, was in his wide mouth. His big blue eyes were on the lieutenant.

"Hank, my old tomato," he said in a resonant bass, "did I understand you to remark upon the subject of a bail bond?"

"This is the agent for the International Surety Company," said the lieutenant. "They write bail bonds."

"I'll arrange for my own bail, thank you," said Dick, who had heard of the tricks and extortion practiced on ignorant prisoners by professional bondsmen.

"Fair enough," said the stout agent, but the flirt of his head invited Dick to step out of ear-shot of the others. "I don't know what business you're in, mister, but if you like the bonding better, hop to it." Dick walked over to him. "You don't want to go to court, eh?" grumbled the stout man confidentially. "Well, that is where you are going, unless you get sprung right here."

"You mean, admitted to bail?" queried Dick. "But the lieutenant says he can't take bail—that he has no power."

"That man don't begin to know his own power. Do you want to walk out now, or do you want to go to court?"

"I'd like to walk away now."

"Slip me thirty dollars."

"What for?"

"Three per cent on a thousand dollars' bail."

"Who fixed the bail?"

"That ain't one of your worries, Mr. Phillipse. If you don't get a hearing right away, you won't be held in less than a thousand dollars for larceny from the person, and you will lose your time for nothing. You will give collateral up there, too—mark my words—and I am offering to take you out on the cuff. Now about a lawyer. You let me give you a winner. I'll give you Little Amby himself—Counselor Ambrose Hinkle of Center Street. You call him up and tell him you're a personal friend of mine. You just say, 'I'm a very intimate friend of Fat Ben, and he gave you to me.' See?"

"That's kind of you, but I happen to be already acquainted with Mr. Hinkle. He's handling a certain matter for me."

"Is this right?" said Fat Ben. "Here's news. Wait up."

He spoke to the lieutenant and left the station house. He returned almost at once, and drew Dick aside again. He put an arm about Dick's waist as a barrier against the whole world, and said, his big blue eyes softly eloquent:

"Dick, my old tomato, why don't you declare yourself? It is no good to have a friend if you cannot give him a play. Little Amby and me are like two fingers in the mud, and I will front for any friend of his, day or night. I will take you out and it will not cost you a cent, and besides, I will tell you a few that you ought to know." He led Dick farther away from the waiting group. "Stall," he said. "Let on that you are giving me an argument over that thirty dollars. Now I will tell you how this thing is. There is a certain party that throws me not a little business in the way of taking him and his friends out, and this party comes to me this morning and says, 'Ben, my old tomato, if you will be down in Old Slip this after, there is going to be a party walked in on a charge of pulling leather, and he is going to want a bond.' Well, that was good enough, and I didn't ask questions about where he gets the advance info, because it is my experience that I can make good money minding my own business. So he says to me, 'This party don't want to be kept too long down there, but he wants to be kept till about half-past two.' So I thought I would tell you, Dick, and let you use your own judgment."

"You heard beforehand that I was to be arrested? Come and tell that to the lieutenant."

"No, I wouldn't do that, Dick. I wouldn't want to stir up hard feelings with this certain party, because, as I was saying, he throws me some nice business. One hand washes the other, isn't it so? Here, I will give you some of my cards and you can pass them around to your friends. Instant service, day or night—Fat Ben the Minute Man. I see you are doing some heavy thinking, and I will ask you to give me a ring if there is a grab on account of what I have told you. If this certain party is grabbed, he will want to give me the bond anyway, because he is a very intimate friend of mine; but still and all, I would like to be on hand when he is booked, as he is a man that likes service. Give me a chance to exercise my money, will you, Dick?"

There was a heated exchange at the desk. Dick heard the Central Office man say, "I can't just place this jane, but I know her from somewhere."

"Oh, sir, don't let him call me a story-teller!" cried the blonde, putting out slim and imploring hands to her champion.

"I'll see this thing through, officer," he said, shaking a menacing left hand while he patted the lady with his right. "There, little girl. . . . How dare you speak of a lady like that? This is the sort of thing that has made the name of the New York police a scandal."

"Don't let that man escape," she said, pointing a quivering finger at Dick. "Watch him until I come back; I'm going out to call my lawyer. We'll see if this shoofly will insult me then, the cur."

She ran toward the door. Fat Ben stepped into her path and said ingratiatingly, "Lady, I saw you take your friend's roll just then, and I hope I am not speaking out of my turn. You better give it back or he will be blaming the police."

"What's that?" exclaimed the lieutenant alertly. "Come back here, madam. Hello, in there—call the matron!"

The elderly gentleman called for vengeance when a roll of bills that had been in his pocket was discovered on the blond girl's person. She asserted that he had given it to her, but the lieutenant was not impressed.

"I'll hold her, but I'm almost sorry she didn't get away with it. This detective showed you his shield up there on Park Row and told you Mr. Phillipse hadn't taken her pocketbook."

"If that tub of lard there would only mind his own blamed business there wouldn't be all this fuss," stormed the blond girl.

"That's what I was doing, lady," said Fat Ben cheerfully, "and I certainly needed a break, be-

cause business is terrible. You are the first customer to-day. Well, how about giving me the bond? And if you think you can give it to anybody else while I am here, try and do it. Slip me thirty dollars."

It was half-past two when Dick walked down the station-house steps, the charge against him having been dismissed. He was late for his appointment with Wong Get, and that was annoying, but the fact that occasioned him genuine anxiety was that the delay had been deliberately made by a secret enemy. He had made contact with this enemy and had lost a tactical advantage, and yet he did not know from what quarter to expect the main attack.

## CHAPTER XIV



F you have any reason to think that something is being ribbed up for you, Mr. Phillipse," counseled the Central Office man, "let me get my partner, and we'll both go with you and cover you."

"I think you better do that," accepted Dick. "I have this reason—that the bondsman in the station house told me that I was arrested on that absurd charge so that I might be detained for an hour or so. I take it that I was being detained from my interview with Wong Get; and I can't imagine who, but Wong Get and myself, knew of that appointment."

They went into a cigar store and into booths. While the detective called up his associate, Dick telephoned Wong Get to excuse himself for being tardy.

"I am still expecting you, Mr. Phillipse," said Wong Get. "You will be here within the half hour? No, you have occasioned me no trouble. And you are bringing the thing that we spoke of? Good."

The other detective was waiting in the Subway exit at Eighty-sixth Street and Broadway. They walked to Riverside Drive and to the apartment house wherein Wong Get lived; they discussed methods and precautions, and finally arranged that the detectives were to wait in the public hall outside Wong Get's door, and were to ring the bell at the end of three minutes, when Dick was to come to the door. They debated the policy of taking the superintendent of the house into their confidence, since he might promptly notify the tenant of what was afoot; they decided, however, to enlist his services. They would tell him that it was another tenant that was under surveillance, and ask him to bring his pass-key, so that an immediate entrance might be effected.

They spoke to the superintendent accordingly. Upon discovering that they were detectives, he resigned his pass-key readily. They rode up to the tenth floor. The officers retired to a turn in the public stairs while Dick rang the bell.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Phillipse," said Wong Get, opening the door in person. He closed it behind Dick and walked away toward a private hall, requesting Dick to follow. On the left side of this hall were the dining room and a bedroom and bath; on the right side were the kitchen and two bedrooms. Dick saw the slight figure of

Wong Get going to the end of the hall, and was pursuing him when intercepted.

"Put them up," said the wheezy voice of Tap-tap Tony.

The one-legged man was in the shadow of the kitchen doorway. Dick stopped dead and put up his hands. He saw the gleam of the pistol, and did not doubt that the murderous-minded cripple would shoot without pause or pity.

"In here," said the cripple, turning about and swinging into the kitchen. A man came from the dining room, struck Dick a pushing blow, and shoved him after Tap-tap Tony. Dick saw the white servant girl. She had been tied, crudely but efficiently, with a length of clothesline. Part of the line was waiting for Dick; he put his hands behind him docilely when commanded. The cord was lashed about his ankles. The robbers had evidently been discussing the bottle of Scotch that stood half emptied on the dresser; they took one of the whisky glasses now, wrapped Dick's handkerchief about it, and thrust it into his mouth.

Dick's eyes were on the white-and-blue kitchen clock, and it seemed that his hope would be realized and that the wallet containing the paper from the bank vault would not be taken from him before help came. Indeed, the one-legged man was

in the act of searching him when the bell rang insistently. The ringing was unheeded.

"Bring that Chink in here," called the crippled robber. He found the wallet and the paper, as Wong Get, still looking unperturbed, was marched into the kitchen by the third of the gang.

Dick heard the grating of the key in the lock, and hurrying steps in the foyer. One of the robbers ran from the kitchen and into the private hall. There was a shout out there and a pistol shot.

Tap-tap Tony was instantly erect. He crossed the kitchen in two leaps, swinging along like a great ape, shot through the open window, and rattled up the fire escape. Hard at his heels ran the fellow who had remained with him in the kitchen. The man who had gone into the foyer did not come back.

Wong Get yelled and the detectives arrived. One of them whipped out a pocketknife and cut Dick's fastenings. He wanted to tell them that they had come too late and that they should take after the robbers as the only chance, but he could not get that wretched little glass out of his mouth; it had engaged behind a tooth. He pulled it out at last, when he had already climbed the steep top ladder of the fire escape and was clambering over the parapet to the roof.

The building adjoining on the north was a thirteen-story apartment house; Dick arrived at the parapet in time to see the crippled robber swarming up the last six feet of a rope that hung down from the roof of the taller building. The rascal climbed like a monkey, doing that six feet in two or three seconds, although he had to climb at least twenty feet of the rope yet. One of the detectives fired at him as he swung over onto the roof, but he vanished without giving evidence of having been hit. The other robber had surrendered without attempting to follow his leader, and was now being searched for weapons preparatory to being marched to a cell.

"We'll get him coming out," called one of the Central Office men, running to the elevator, which had a landing on the roof. The car was waiting. The other detective followed, hurrying his prisoner along.

He said to Dick, "You'll find this fellow's gun back there, and you might watch that rope."

It was a fortunately taken precaution; the car had hardly sunk from sight, bearing the detectives and the subdued robber, than the head and shoulders of Tap-tap Tony appeared above the parapet of the neighboring roof. He caught the rope, flung himself over the brink and came down through the air like a spider. Dick was awaiting

him. While the man's foot was still pawing for a landing place, Dick jammed the captured pistol into his back.

"Keep your hands where they are, you vicious dog," he said. He would have shot the man without a qualm. Like most law-abiding people, Dick's restraints were humanity and conscience, and not any squeamishness.

Dick took a revolver from the man's outside jacket pocket, and then, with a real thrill, found the wallet in his breast. The paper was still in it.

"Got him, have you?" bawled a voice overhead. Dick glanced up and saw a uniformed policeman on the adjoining roof.

"Keep him covered until I get down and up to you!" shouted the policeman. "Don't take any chances with that bird, friend!"

When the policeman was gone, Tap-tap Tony spoke to Dick in the small and repressed voice that Dick had heard on the night that Scissors Lafetra was murdered. "I can tell you something about that paper, sir."

"What can you tell me?" demanded Dick.

"I can tell you what it means—and I can tell you who killed Duane."

"Was he killed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who killed him?"

"You'll let me go, sir? Let me get to that fire escape, and I'll find an open window—take a chance on it. I'll tell you, sir."

"Oh, no," jeered Dick. "I'd rather have you than your lies. You had a nice time, Mr. Tap-tap Tony, hunting me at Blue Point like a rabbit; now you can try a spell of something else. You're going back to Suffolk County, and when they're through with you, you won't trouble honest people again for many a long year. I'm going to spare neither time nor trouble in seeing you get what you have fairly earned, and you'll get it, for you'll have no crooked politician or political judge to save you."

"I realize now that I made a terrible mistake," said Tap-tap Tony tremulously. His eyes were suddenly suffused with tears. "It's what I was told long ago, sir, and wouldn't take warning—that those who live by the hammer can expect to die by it. Yes, sir, and I know, too, that no matter how severely I am punished, it will not be more than I have richly deserved."

A strangled sob came from him. He winked hard and dropped one of his hands, which had been at his ears, to his upper breast pocket, where it seemed to grope for something wherewith to wipe away his tears. It fell from there to the

jacket pocket from which Dick had taken the pistol.

"Stop your confounded sniveling," grumbled Dick. And then he jumped back, but not in time to avoid a heavy blow in the pit of the stomach. He dodged at the same time, and Tap-tap Tony, who had darted at Dick like a striking snake, went down on his left shoulder for a rolling fall, that brought him up against the parapet.

"Don't try that again," said Dick tolerantly. "Stay right where you are now."

The policeman came from the elevator. "Got him, eh?" he called gladly. "Get up out of that, you rat. Do you know how we came to catch this mob at work, sir? There was a citizen downstairs saw them running up the fire escape, and he yelled to me. Well, there was a flat in that house robbed only a month ago by fellows that came down from that roof on a rope ladder; so I figured this was the same kind of job, so I whistled and rapped and ran right in next door and met this bird coming down the stairs."

"He won't climb down onto any more roofs for a while," said Dick.

"I wouldn't be sure of that," said the policeman, bringing out his handcuffs. "He may get bail before nightfall. The way they turn these rats out as fast as we can run them in, makes me

think sometimes I need glasses. You'd think you was seeing double, too, if you was to run a man in and see him on your beat again as soon as you get back there yourself. There's a pretty thing."

He had taken a short and heavy knife from the prisoner's sleeve.

"Hello," exclaimed Dick, understanding for the first time that Tap-tap Tony had struck him with a weapon. The heavy metal buckle of his belt had been nearly cut through; he slipped a hand inside his shirt and brought it back touched with red.

"Lucky boy," said the policeman. "Another half inch and it would have broke through the stomach wall."

Dick went with him to the street to have the pleasure of seeing the sinister cripple definitely on his way to prison. He was standing among the people who had congregated in the street to await the return of the policeman when somebody tapped his shoulder.

"Hello, Phillipse."

He turned and saw Lowell Zittel.

"I heard you were here, Phillipse, but I didn't expect to find you creating so much excitement. What's been going on up there?"

"There was an attempt at burglary."

"You seem to have a live time of it. Hardly

a dull moment. Are you going downtown again to-day, Phillipse?"

"I don't think I'll bother so late in the day. Why?"

"Let's go somewhere and I'll buy a drink. I want to have a talk with you. The Great Central on Eighty-second Street is a good place."

"I must get the Colonia Trust on Eighty-first Street by five o'clock. I have that paper with me and I want to get rid of it. I've been keeping it downtown, but I have a box in the Colonia up here, too, luckily."

"Before we go, let me illustrate what I have to tell you, Phillipse. Look over there by the Park wall. Do you see that coupé?"

"The fourth in the line—with one man in it? Yes."

"Good. Now we'll walk to the Great Central and I'll show you."

They walked over to West End Avenue, turned the corner and stopped short, by Zittel's request. Ten seconds later, the coupé turned the corner after them. It rolled on its way up the Avenue, and Dick could not see that the driver looked at them, but the coincidence was highly suggestive.

"There you have it," said Zittel. "He was following."

"Following us? I think so myself."

"Following me. And I know just why he does it, too."

They went into the grille of the Great Central—a second-rate hotel whose management still believed in the since exploded economic theory that it paid to serve alcohol to moneyed addicts. Zittel had a rye whisky.

"That stuff makes me drunk," said Dick, declining the treat. "I'm funny that way. Well, Zittel, what seems to be troubling you?"

He was curt; he did not care particularly for the salesman's company.

"It's a long story, mate," said Zittel, forcing a facetious note.

"In that event you'd better let me get in two telephone calls that are preying on my mind."

He called Little Amby and told him of the developments.

"Wait for me there," directed the lawyer. "I'm coming right up with a man that I want you to hear. At the Great Central grille."

Dick called up Wong Get's apartment and got the Chinaman on the wire. He had no animosity against Wong Get, realizing that what he had done in tolling Dick into the trap had been done under constant threat of death.

"It is gone, Mr. Phillipse," said Wong Get.

"The fan is gone? Do you know who took it?"

"I do not know this. It is gone. I am very sorry for you, Mr. Phillipse, and then a little for myself. But it is not important to me now."

Dick hung up. He lit a cigarette to calm his troubled mind and nodded to Zittel. "Well?"

## CHAPTER XV



ITTEL'S clear brown eyes dwelt steadily on Dick. "Phillipse, you're a friend of mine, aren't you?"

"You can depend on me to do anything I can for you."

"That fellow I showed you in the coupé was a detective." Zittel paused expectantly, but Dick merely nodded and murmured, barely acknowledging receipt of the information and inviting no confidences. A door to the grille was opening and closing under the impulses of a wandering breeze; Zittel jumped up and shut it with an unintended crash. He took a turn up and down, seated himself opposite Dick, and said: "Phillipse, you're a queer sort, but I feel I can trust you. You recall the first night I met you and Florence Duane? I told you that I was a stranger to Garry—and that wasn't so."

"You knew him?" said Dick with awakening interest.

"Very well. I had known him for more than a

year. I met him in Chicago in May or April of last year, and I was in touch with him from time to time after that."

"Why did you give us to understand that you didn't know him?"

"You'll comprehend when I tell you some things. I think you know that Garry Duane acted as a betting commissioner at times. I was intimate enough and thought enough of him to give him nine thousand dollars to put on Dempsey at Toledo last year."

"A pleasant beginning for a friendship."

"It mightn't have been. After the fight Duane told me that he had understood he was to use his discretion, and that he had put the money on Willard. Well, I believe people did let him bet their money for them as he judged best, but that wasn't my case and he couldn't have understood it so. I do believe he was the soul of honor, and that if Willard had won I would have collected, but that didn't alter the case, and I wanted my money back. He did the squarest thing he could do then, after pleading that he didn't have the funds; he gave me a note for nine thousand dollars and said he'd pay it off seven hundred and fifty a month. Up to the time of his death he had paid off fifty-five hundred dollars, so that he still owed me thirty-five hundred and interest."

"Why didn't you file your claim against the estate?"

Zittel handed Dick a promissory note. It was made out to Whitman W. Reese for nine thousand dollars and interest; the maker was Garret K. Duane. Noted on its back were payments on account in the total sum of fifty-five hundred dollars, the last payment having been made in May, 1920.

"This isn't indorsed to you. How is this yours?"

"I am the Whitman W. Reese that's named there."

"I see. If I'm to accept this as evidence of debt, Zittel, it will have to be very well supported. I see you didn't put this through a bank. Why not?"

"I had no bank account in that name, and I didn't dare to start one. The debt, so far as I was concerned, was a debt of honor, and if you want to accept it in that way, well and good. You can readily substantiate what I've told you. There must be a record of the different times I called Blue Point and talked to Duane. And if you get Duane's canceled checks—he only had one account—you'll find a check made out for every payment shown on that note. That's proof, isn't it? The checks were made to Cash, because the

account was a joint one with Mrs. Duane, and she had to sign the checks, too; and as he said to me, he didn't want his wife to know all his business. Having no bank account, I had to cash the checks around about, and you can look up the people I gave them to and find out."

"I'll certainly investigate before paying you, Zittel. File the claim and I'll have it looked up."

"I can't do it, Phillipse. The fact is that that nine thousand dollars wasn't mine. Now you have the truth. That's why I had to leave Chicago and change my name. I haven't run away from the people I took the money from. I put the cards right on the table and told them the money was gone in a bet on a prize fight, and that I would pay it back. So they agreed to withhold prosecution, and I've been paying them the money as I got it from Duane. All I want is to return these people their money as I have promised, and clear my good name."

"Why don't you assign this claim to them and let them file it and collect directly?"

"Oh, no," said Zittel positively; "that wouldn't do at all."

"Who are these people?"

"I don't see where that's important."

"Only that when you make a claim that's sub-

ject to contest, you want to be frank as to the collateral circumstances."

"They are the people I worked for in Chicago."

"As a salesman?"

"Salesman. I collected a big account, and thought I could use the money and put it back in a week."

"And you think these people have put a detective onto you now?"

"I'm sure of it. After Duane's death I let them know that I couldn't pay them any more money for the present, as I wasn't getting it. So they're investigating me to see what money I'm touching, and they'll probably make a demand and a threat. What do they want me to do? A man can't live on bread and water."

"It's been done, Zittel, by people who forgot the difference between *meum* and *tuum*—and not as an advertising stunt either. Well, I'm sorry to hear of your fix, and if I can honor your claim without prejudice to the estate, I'll do so when the time comes. After all, the amount is small. Unless you're in debt otherwise, I don't see why you can't raise thirty-five hundred dollars."

"You mean nine thousand."

"Didn't you pay these people the money you had from Duane?"

"Well, yes; that would make it thirty-five hun-

dred. That's all I'm asking from you. Can't you resume the payments on that note at once?"

"Oh, no—if it were only because the estate has no money."

"I feared that would be your answer. But let me ask you one thing, Phillipse: Don't breathe a word of what I've told you to Florence. We all err somehow, but a man is entitled to a chance to try again, particularly when he has at last met a girl who means something real and vital in his life."

"No, I won't speak to her about it. I would probably have felt obliged to do so if the information had come to me from another quarter."

"Thanks, old man. I'll speak to Florence when the time comes. I realize I can't present that claim against the estate openly until she hears of it, from me or from the Chicago people; but that's no inducement as against her good opinion. I'd only tell her if I thought she was liable to hear it from somebody else. I'm terribly obliged to you for keeping the matter quiet, and I want you to feel that I will do as much for you any time."

"You are very kind," said Dick, with more courtesy than gratitude. "Do you want to leave that note with me?"

"I don't think that would be quite the thing.

Don't feel for a moment, Phillipse, that I hesitate to trust you with it, but it is all the evidence of the claim I have, and I shouldn't give it up."

"You'll excuse me, Zittel," said Dick, seeing Little Amby entering in company with his man Cohen. "I have an appointment here, and I'll have to run away."

"Let me do that, rather," said the salesman, jumping up.

Cohen seated himself several tables away. Little Amby, slapping his sharply creased trouser leg with a folded newspaper like a race tout, came directly to Dick.

"You saved the paper anyway," he said, resuming the talk they had had on the wire. "Let me have a look at that mysterious document, will you, Phillipse?" Dick took out his wallet, abstracted the long envelope that contained the potter's verse, and tendered it to the lawyer. Little Amby took out the sheet of paper, unfolded it, folded it again, and said, "What do you know about this man Zittel?"

"Why do you ask?" countered Dick.

"It's one of my principles, Phillipse," said the lawyer, moving to restore the paper to its envelope, "to get well acquainted with everybody connected with a transaction in which I am interested. I don't sit in a game with a stranger, and

I don't want one standing about. Ah, here's the man will tell us something about him."

An oldish man—stocky, dark, quietly dressed—was entering. He came to the table when Little Amby beckoned, and sat down. "Cohen!" called Little Amby. The managing clerk came over. Little Amby said, "We'll be here for a half hour or so; you can run down to Fifty-seventh Street and see that man in the Bopp case, and hurry back. I think you'd better—" He arose, turned his back to Dick and whispered to Cohen. The managing clerk nodded mutely and left the room. Little Amby sat down again, still toying with Dick's envelope, and said to the dark and stocky man: "What did you dig up, Saracena?"

"Quite a little. He sells for Stolnick & Garra-brant, of West Thirty-ninth Street, women's dresses."

"And that," said Little Amby, "is information that no ordinary person can get without looking in the telephone book. You're some sleuth, Saracena."

"You're speaking of Zittel," inferred Dick. "Now I recall Mr. Saracena—he was in a coupé on the west side of Riverside Drive in the Eighties only a short time ago. It was you, was it not, Mr. Saracena? You drove over to West End Avenue—"

"This gentleman was with Zittel," said Saracena, pleased not more than very little. "Don't take the words out of my mouth. I found out that Zittel was acquainted with Duane, the man who killed himself. He talked to Duane over the wire twice in April, and again on May tenth."

"Where did you get that?" Little Amby looked at Dick to note the effect of this supposed news.

"At the Breckenham, where Zittel lives. My information is that he spends more time sporting around than selling dresses. He's been quite friendly with a little Italian girl who works as a dancing hostess in the Lion d'Or on Columbus Circle, and it seems that Duane must have paid him quite some money, as he cashed three of Duane's checks there. He hasn't been there lately, much. I haven't learned what his business with Duane was, but it probably had something to do with betting, as this Duane is Garry Duane the sporting man. Whatever it was, Duane seems to have wanted to keep it dark from his family; the three times he talked to Zittel on the wire were when the family was away to Lakewood and Duane was supposed to be down there, too. I haven't heard yet of any personal conferences."

After Saracena was gone, Dick said, "I knew the substance of this already. Zittel told me himself."

"When?"

"Just now. He told me about his transaction with Garry Duane. It seems that Duane owed him money and hadn't paid it all when he was killed. Zittel wanted the money and had to tell me the story to explain a note Duane had given him. I promised not to repeat it to Mrs. Duane, but I think you ought to know."

The lawyer's black eyes did not leave Dick's face as the latter recounted his talk with Lowell Zittel. As he concluded, Cohen appeared again; Little Amby excused himself and went to his clerk and spoke to him privately. He returned.

"What's Zittel's angle on Mrs. Duane, in your opinion?" he asked. "Just a gold digger, is he?"

"No, I don't think so, Hinkle. I think he's head over heels in love with her; I must give him that much credit. I speak from seeing them together."

"And what about her?"

"I'm not so clear there. She invites his attentions, but she is a woman who is very fond of admiration, who must always have a man hanging onto her. And only the type of man that likes to be trampled on by a woman would put up with her. She's so tyrannical and arbitrary—a very pretty woman, though. I do believe she likes him, but whether it is for himself or because he lets

her run over him roughshod, is more than I'm psychologist enough to say."

"You don't think he amounts to much."

"I don't like him, and I don't know why," said Dick frowning thoughtfully. "He's always been pleasant to me, outside of an occasional pert remark, but I feel there is something effeminate about him; he impresses me as a man who might get hysterical, and I don't fancy that sort. Just a mean animal prejudice of mine, Hinkle, and no fair criticism of Zittel. Lord, when I look back at the fine people I've cordially disliked, and at the good-for-nothings that I've cottoned to on sight and never stopped liking, I don't offer my instincts as evidence against anybody but myself."

"So the situation now is that we have the paper and the other side has the fan," said Little Amby, handing the envelope to Dick. "It is true that for a few minutes they—meaning the people we're up against, whoever they are—they had both the paper and fan, but I don't think we'll have cause to regret that. I don't believe that Tap-tap was steering that job; he passed the fan to somebody. Unless Wong Get was standing in with him."

"I don't believe he was. He impressed me very well—as a capable person who had affairs of his own to attend to. I think we can take his story at its face value—that he was jumped by this

gang and compelled to lead me on. There is no doubt as to where the gang got its information; Huey Gow, the gambler, was eavesdropping. Nobody else knew of the appointment."

"Yes, they did. The police knew; I knew; Zittel knew. I understood you to say that there was a print of that fan that served the same purpose as the fan."

"Yes—in China. So Wong Get said."

"China's not exactly convenient to the Subway, but it's not as far off as it used to be."

"I have had it in my mind to ask you—did Scissors ever tell you what he was up to that night when he took the fan? I don't think he told us. If he did, we didn't listen, because we were all intent on hearing what had happened to Garry."

"Not all," said Little Amby significantly. "No, Scissors admitted frankly everything that he was sure I knew, and he gave me a ghost story for the rest. But I have a pretty fair idea of what he was about, because I know what he was. He was a gunman, a killer. He didn't have brains enough for any other branch of the business. His specialty was getting doped up and emptying his gun into somebody for a hundred dollars or so. You can take it that he was there to kill."

"Is it possible that two different killers were pursuing Garry Duane that night?"

"They were probably working together. That's the more approved method—to send several. You would think that the first man to arrive on the scene would wait for Scissors, but he may have been full of dope too. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that Scissors would squeal on a fellow worker, because he would be just as guilty of murder as the boy that fired the shot. Those fellows know the law where it touches on their business. And it doesn't look like a bought job; only one shot was fired. A gunman empties his pistol—the whole works. The evidence is contradictory; but I do think we can work on the hypothesis that Scissors went there that night to kill Garry Duane. That's nearly all we have. Except that it wasn't his own job. Tell me, what developed out of the investigation into Scissors' death?"

"Nothing. We went to Riverhead and were questioned by the district attorney and coaxed to own up, and there the matter rests. The authorities seemed to view the murder as they would view a toy puzzle—hard to solve and not worth solving. You know the perfunctory inquiry made into the killing of any professional criminal."

"It seems impossible that the man could have been shot down as you described and without any evidence of the killer. The Suffolk people may

not be acutely interested in finding the killer of a vicious criminal, and neither are we *per se*, but we're greatly interested in this particular instance, because it bears directly on the case of Garry Duane. I'd like to view the scene and size up the rest of the group; can you fix it for me?"

"I'm sure you'll be most welcome. I've been going down nearly every week-end."

"A model executor," said Little Amby, watching him slyly. "Most executors find their jobs confounded nuisances."

Fat Ben entered the grille. "Hello, Amby!" he bawled. "Hello, there, Dick, my old tomato! Much obliged for the business."

"What business?"

"Wasn't it you gave my office a ring? Amby, I had your office on the wire; they said you were up here with Dick. I was giving them a friend of mine who's just been grabbed. A fifteen-thousand-dollar bond—half for me and half for the company. Well, there's some harrowing details yet to go over, but the judge slipped me a figure on the quiet."

"Who was it?" asked Little Amby.

"Tap-tap Tony. Just been sprung. Well, Tap-tap said he had another lawyer, but I gave him to your office to work on anyway. I got the bond all right. A birthday, boys—what's your pleasure?"

## CHAPTER XVI



N the following Saturday afternoon, Little Amby and Dick took the Merrick Road for Blue Point in Dick's car.

"Why don't you sell that Blue Point place for the girls, Phillipse?" suggested the lawyer.  
"They don't want it, I suppose?"

"They should sell, but country stuff is easier to buy than to sell. I've advised them to put it on the market."

"How many acres?"

"Fifty, I think. And a great big barn of a house. It's a very pretty place, but it's not easy to get people to come out and look at it."

"Take some pictures of it, and get a set of plans of the house."

"It might be hard to find a plan of it; it must be twenty-five years old at least. Not entirely modern either; it has old-fashioned combination gas and electric fixtures. I don't know what the heating is."

But having time to pursue the idea, they ran  
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by the Duane place and continued into Patchogue, the nearest town of any size. They found an old real-estate man who remembered when the house was built; he sent them to Hicks & Cornell, architects.

"We didn't build the house," said Mr. Hicks, searching among dusty prints. "We're not as old as that. We handled the remodeling, though, some years back. We did it for Duane, I think; he wanted some changes and we made sketches."

He let Little Amby have a plan, on a promise to commend him to the prospective buyer; they resumed their journey to Blue Point.

"I'll show this to a client of mine who wants a country place," said Little Amby. "Perhaps you'd better not speak of it to the ladies until we have a firm offer and are ready to snap them up if they say yes."

Florence greeted them at the house; Neli was somewhere about the grounds. Little Amby was introduced to Suydam and to Doctor Wessel and Lowell Zittel.

"May I show Mr. Hinkle the wonderful view from the cupola?" requested Dick almost at once. And hardly waiting for Florence's permission, he was on his way upstairs.

"Marvelous," said Little Amby, looking out at the prospect of green meadows, dark woods and

silver waters. He didn't give a snap of his bony fingers for scenery; he saw in it nothing but property, improved or unimproved. "Doesn't that motorboat coming up the creek look pretty. That's a woman getting out of it, isn't it? Perhaps that's Miss Duane."

"Where?" He swung his gaze instantly in the indicated direction. "No, that's not she, but I see her just ahead there."

Letting the rest of the scenery go begging for admiration, he led the way downstairs and across the lawn to the hidden path by the brook. Nell was walking there, followed sedately by Vanity, the family cat.

"This is Ambrose Hinkle, the famous criminal lawyer," said Dick when he had spoken for himself.

She took Little Amby's hand. "Is he as nice as you, Dick?"

"Only in looks, Miss Duane," said Little Amby modestly. "I wouldn't deceive you. He has the edge on me in the plain and solid sort of virtues."

"You must be terribly handsome."

"No fair, Miss Duane—you looked."

"Have you met everybody?"

"At the house. Most charming people, though Mr. Phillipse told me privately that I hadn't met anybody yet. You have a beautiful place here,

Miss Duane; we were admiring it from the cupola. We saw you from there. A boat stopped in the creek and a woman got out and came up this path, and we saw you when she stopped to let you pass."

"It was the maid Kennedy," said Dick. They returned to the house.

"Doctor Wessel is reading handwritings for us," called Florence. "He told us most interesting things about Lowell. Dick, would you like to hear the low-down truth about yourself?"

"I'd rather see a sample of Mr. Hinkle's writing, if I might," said Doctor Wessel. "I have the writing of many famous people, including Lord Grey, Admiral von Tirpitz, Ripley the trunk murderer, Mrs. Clogher the publicist, and the man Finch who jumped from the Brooklyn Bridge and later asked to be shot to the moon in a rocket. May I have yours, Mr. Hinkle? Write this verse that we're all so much interested in."

"Bracket me with the man who wanted to name a passenger for the rocket," said Little Amby, sitting down to paper. "I have that complex, too, and a longer list to pick from." He wrote out the verse.

"Sign it, please," directed Wessel. "Thank you. Your signature is full of character, Mr. Hinkle. I'd like to show you Admiral von Tir-

pit' ; the anchor is delineated most clearly. There is your symbol, in the capital H. It shows again in the small s, but it is better in the H."

"It looks like a dollar mark," said Dick.

"It is a dollar mark. See it here again, and again in the body of the writing. The writer is so greedy for money that his subconsciousness traces dollar marks at every opportunity."

"Frank," said Little Amby. "Friendly, too, I'm sure."

"I don't think this is so much fun," said Nell. "The doctor always tells such terrible things."

"That's just the fun of it," said Florence. "Go on, doctor."

"And yet there is extravagance here," said Wessel, who, in his usual way, had heeded nobody. "See how low down on the paper he wrote —right in the middle—extravagance and self-assertion. The writer would do almost anything for money and would then throw it away. The judgment is excellent; that is indicated by the balanced margins. The writing is small and the lines are straight—subtlety and calmness. The letters are vertical; that is self-complacency or only self-confidence and coldness. Here's disimulation again in the o's and a's that are open below. See what bold and wide capitals, and how vigorous the t bars are; ambitiously high and well

to the right of the upstroke; but they slant down—pessimism. The writer is full of energy and self-confidence, and yet distrusts the future; he might be a soldier or a criminal."

"And he's not a soldier, doctor," said Dick with a chuckle.

"No," said Wessel, "I can see that. Don't accept literally what I have told you. I have named a few salient characteristics where there are hundreds of others—some confused, some contradictory. Here are legal touches for instance, and yet the writer is not a lawyer, but a business man."

"Not a lawyer? There is a general delusion to that effect."

"That may be," said Wessel.

"I think the doctor is very good indeed," said Little Amby cheerfully. "He means that the writer is not a lawyer among lawyers, and as a matter of fact, if I knew as much law as my man Cohen forgets overnight, I could probably qualify as somebody else's managing clerk. Much obliged for the reading, doctor. Tell me, have you employed your talents in reading that verse itself?"

"I have, indeed."

"What do you think of it?"

"Of the author, psychically? The composition evinces an undue elation. Common experience

teaches us that the lot of the farmer is not so happy. An arterial relaxation is evidenced, producing a hyperæmia of the highest cerebral centers. My prognosis would not be unfavorable; the thing was composed, I should say, during an attack of transitory mania, by some farmer whose mind was unbalanced by his misfortunes. You see the typical delusion of grandeur and wealth; the poor fellow could have been in an institution when he wrote that, and he would inevitably believe he owned everything he saw about him."

"I dare say it wasn't written by a farmer at all. Certainly, I never heard a dirt farmer talking that way about his business, unless he was trying to sell out. I mean, do you read in that a message that we can't see? I presume you've seen the original writing by Mr. Duane. Did you see a suggestion of a hidden message, or is that line of work out of your province?"

"I have indeed given many odd periods to the examination of that verse, Mr. Hinkle. I have tried to throw a light on it by the use of numerology. Graphology is of no assistance here."

"But you used numerology?"

"Yes. It seems to me that the number 10 is the key to that secret message. Duane seems to have been ruled largely by the number 10, and also by its constituents 3 and 7. Without piling up a

thousand details to make cumulative proof—have I the correct term, Mr. Hinkle?"

"Cumulative evidence—yes."

"Without piling such details up, let me call to your attention that there are ten letters in the name Garry Duane. And we all choose our familiar names, subconsciously. And you will remember that he chose as his own private den, one of the seven rooms on the third floor. He killed himself on the twenty-first day of the fifth month in the year 1920; if you will add those numerals, giving its own value to each, you will have 20, which is again two tens."

"How is your radio working?" asked Dick restively. "I think there's a program on somewhere."

"No, let's hear this," protested Little Amby. "So ten was his lucky number, was it, doctor?"

"I said nothing about luck. It was his number. As to the choice of twelve o'clock, that is not so clear, although we must bear in mind that the number 12 is vastly important all during the year 1920, whose numerals add up to 12. You see the 7 and 3 again in the choice of the twenty-first day; the significance of the fifth month does not need arguing."

"We'll hear next that the World War was

settled by numeralogy," said Zittel, winking at Florence Duane. "Was it, doctor?"

"Certainly. There were twenty-three nations engaged, and the Armistice was signed on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. Mr. Zittel may add those numerals for us. . . . Having arrived at the number 10, Mr. Hinkle, with emphasis on 7 and 3, I applied those numbers to the verse. And I will not hear you say that Duane did not choose this verse with the number in mind; he did so choose it, subconsciously. Chance, so called, is uncomprehended design. I shall give you what I have so far." Doctor Wessel took out a notebook and scrutinized an entry with gravity. "This is what I have written here: 'Skip 3, take 3; skip 10, take 10.' Then, subdividing the 3's; 'Skip 1, take 2; skip 1, take 2.' So much for the 3's; now for the 10's. We begin 'Skip 7, take 3.' You see that there is a pattern in it. Now apply those directions to the letters of the verse, skipping the first three, taking the next three, and so forward, you pick out this message: 'The great roll I spent at—' I have not proceeded further as yet, but it is clear that the reference is to a great roll of bank notes, is it not?"

"Startling," said Little Amby. "Go ahead, by all means."

"But is it true?" gasped Florence, reaching for the paper.

"Absolutely. Try it. It looks as though the doctor has something by the tail. His science is too deep for me, but the result speaks for itself."

"Spent?" repeated Lowell Zittel, bending over Florence to read for himself. "Where? When? On what?"

"I haven't had time to plot the rest of the pattern yet," said Wessel. "I never present incomplete results of my own motion; Mr. Hinkle asked me to speak."

"May we have the music now?" said Suydam. He turned on the radio.

The inevitable cocktails and appetizers came on; the lamps were lighted. After dinner—to which Suydam and Wessel stayed, having failed to finish their discussion of the estate's affairs with Dick—they sat in the dining room over coffee and cigarettes.

The atmosphere felt oppressive to Dick. The day, in late August, had not been unusually warm, and yet he felt positively hot and stuffy. He was perspiring. He decided that the black coffee had been too much for him, and was dissembling his discomfort when Florence exclaimed, "Did you ever see such extraordinary weather! I don't know when I've felt it so warm."

"But isn't extraordinary weather the rule in the country?" asked Little Amby. "I've never yet found the place where the weather didn't act up for strangers." He had turned from talking numerology with his neighbor Doctor Wessel; he had broached the subject himself, and had kept the psychiatrist discoursing on it.

"Smoke!" cried Lowell Zittel, pointing. The company looked and saw a gray cloud drifting in from the living room. Chairs were pushed back and napkins dropped.

"Phew, it's thick here!" called Zittel from the living room. "Something's on fire. Anybody empty an ash receiver into a wastebasket?"

"It looks more as if he emptied an ash barrel," said Dick, on his feet. "Look, it's here in the foyer, too!"

"And out here!" cried Florence from the pantry.

Already the lights were hazy, haloed; outside the dining room they were mere blurs, nebulous.

The two maids came in from the kitchen. The civilized order of the household was disintegrating under a common human fear of fire.

"It smells like rubber," offered Doctor Wessel. "Burning insulation, probably."

"Better pull the switch and put out the lights," said Suydam.

"No, no," said Dick sharply. "We'll put out no lights in this house. This is no burning insulation."

"Choking," coughed someone. Forms were growing indistinct.

"Better call the engines!"

"No use with a fire like this, in a frame house."

"Hello, the wire's dead!"

Dick was beside Nell. "We're going out," he said. "Everybody out to be counted!"

They crowded into the foyer; so murky was the air now that their hands were extended before them fendingly. They all got safely to the lawn.

"There's the fire now!"

"It's all over. She'll be through the roof in five minutes!"

Smoke was billowing from the doors and windows, all of which, fortunately, had been left open. The undulating clouds were agitated by flashes as of flame.

"It's not fire yet. That's the lights in the house!"

"Good heavens, what could make all that smoke?"

"There's nothing in the cellar!" shouted Zittel, who was crouched beside the house wall and peering through a window. He kicked in a pane of

glass. "Nothing—not even smoke!" He came up to Dick. "There's fire though. I felt the heat coming up through that grating in the floor in the dining room. I happened to be sitting right by it."

Dick struck his hands together. "Nell, what kind of heat have you here?"

"Hot air. It was in the house when we bought it, and Garry liked it better than steam or hot water."

"The fire's in the furnace," he said to Zittel. "You were sitting by a register. Do you know where the cold-air intake is, Nell? Well, we'll find it. Come on, Zittel."

They ran to the broken window, got it open, and clambered through and down to the cellar floor. Dick struck matches and looked about for a light, while Zittel groped his way to the kitchen stairs. He found a switch there, and the cellar, in which there was barely a breath of smoke, was flooded with light.

Dick ran to the furnace, yanked open the door, and saw a fire of sticks snapping merrily. He looked on top of the furnace for the fresh-air chamber, and then followed the big pipe across the cellar ceiling until it ended in the house wall.

"No break in it anywhere," he announced.

"That thing was put in from outside the house. The fresh-air intake is behind that shrubbery in the angle between the pantry window and the conservatory." They hurried from the cellar by the entrance from outside the house, and in a few seconds were pushing through the shrubbery. "Here it is!" cried Dick, sheltering a match. "The grating here has been forced off and I can see something in there. I can't quite reach it, confound it."

"I'll get the furnace poker," volunteered Zittel. He was away and back again, and Dick reached in with the poker, engaged the object he had seen and drew it forth.

It was an open box of iron, about a foot and a half long by nine inches wide and deep; its edges were battered and ragged. Dick did not make this observation at once because the box was fuming mightily.

"Get it under this tap, quick," snapped Zittel, "or it will chase us out into the South Country Road."

"I'll say that if it's not supposed to smoke it is badly out of order," said Dick, dragging the belching box to the gardener's tap.

"What is that stuff?"

"Something bought in an Army supply store, I imagine. It looks to me like one of those smoke

candles we used in France—potassium nitrate, pitch and sawdust, to be exact. What we called Type S."

"There's no danger?"

"Not from fire. The smoke will blow out of the house soon, and we'll be able to see where we're at."

"But how did that smoke get into the house from out here?"

"This opening here sucks in the air that goes over the fire box of the furnace, and then up the flues and out the registers. The fire was lit in the furnace so as to heat the air and start it flowing up and sucking smoke."

"It isn't coming out of the windows so thickly any more."

"Let's go and get the men and go through the house. We were deliberately smoked out. We'll find out why."

"Right," said Zittel resolutely. "I have a gun in my grip—I believe in being ready to defend myself. Have you a gun, Phillipse?"

"Why, no," said Dick. "I do seem to learn slowly. We'll deploy as infantry, and you can be the artillery in support. Careless of me—I have an automatic lying at home, too."

The window openings grew brighter. The smoke was thinned to wisps when Zittel led the

unarmed men into the house to search it. Dick was pleased with the salesman's grit, but not surprised by it, as he might have been before 1918. He had since seen too many workaday mechanics and pen pushers and counter jumpers—sound-nerved men going through with an appalling duty—outgame the picturesque chaps, the neurotic chaps who were drawn like moths by the flame of war.

They went quickly through the first and second floors, searching closely. Dick was confident that the smoke had been meant to screen the movements of a housebreaker, and that the man or men had counted on its continuance for a much longer period. It was likely that they were still in the house. A feature the consideration of which he postponed was that the attempt should have been made when so many people were in the house—strange strategy, that.

Wessel was posted at the foot of the rear stairs that led only to the study; the others mounted the main staircase to the third floor. They were going through the rooms methodically when Zittel, who had posted himself at the head of the stairs where he commanded all exits, brought them to him by a loud exclamation.

“In there!” he cried, pointing to a closed door at the end of the hall.

"I just looked in there," said Suydam. "That's only a linen closet."

"I saw a man there," declared Zittel, advancing to the door, with pistol pointed.

His hand was on the knob when the door was driven against him from within, making him stagger back. A crouching figure darted from the closet and whisked into the adjoining bathroom. Dick bounded after the fugitive, but Zittel, recovering himself, was still in the lead. He was in the act of leaning from the bathroom window when Dick arrived at his shoulder.

The window was a dormer window imposed on a sloping roof. The roof sloped out and down from the sill, ending in a rain gutter at the level of the second-floor ceilings. Dick saw a man's hands clutching this rain gutter and swinging along it; the fugitive had gone through the window, slid—by accident or of purpose—over the edge of the roof and had caught the rain gutter as he fell. Purpose was suggested by the rapidity with which he was swinging himself now toward the roof of the one-story extension that was the kitchen porch. Zittel fired two shots at the hands, which were all of the fellow that was visible. The hands vanished when they were above the porch roof; an indistinct figure landed on the roof, poised itself for an instant and then launched out

in a leap to the ground. It was less easily seen now, hardly to be seen at all except when it moved. It got up, made a single frantic movement forward and toppled to the ground again. And again it fought its way up, only again to fall.

"Got him!" yelled Dick exultantly.

Zittel leaned far out over the sill and took careful aim at the dim outline of the fallen man. As Dick turned to run from the room and down the stairs, he heard the pistol go off. The fourth shot was fired as Dick jumped down from the kitchen steps to lay hold of the fugitive.

"Hello, up there!" he shouted apprehensively. "Cease firing, Zittel, will you? You nearly got me with that one."

The fugitive had crawled to the house wall. As Dick came upon him, he said mildly, "You win again, sir. I think my ankle's broken."

It was Tap-tap Tony. He was untouched by the zealous marksman at the bathroom window, but the long leap from the extension roof had brought him down.

Dick and Suydam carried him to the front porch to await the arrival of Chief Marvin. As they mounted the steps with the doubly crippled desperado, they heard a car start and recede in the South Country Road. Dick took a loaded revolver from him, assured himself that he wasn't

carrying a secondary armament this time, and left him with Suydam. Dick went into the house to report.

Suydam came to him later in the evening with an air of importance. Dick was in the kitchen at the time—putting the maid Kennedy through a private cross-examination. He had chanced to glance into the kitchen while the company was in the pantry recounting, bracer in hand, what they had done in the moment of emergency, and he saw her carrying the iron box. He watched her and saw her thrust it into the lowest compartment of the coal range. “The ash box?” she queried in answer to his question.

“Who took it out of there?”

“I did, to be sure,” she said, bridling at his peremptory tone. “I put it outside to be emptied. Is there any sin in that?”

“You know what it was used for?”

“Yes, it was used for an ash box,” she said, turning her back on him flatly. “And it’ll be used for that same again, when them that takes too much on themselves will be gone where they came from.”

Dick could not afford an altercation with her, and was leaving the kitchen when Suydam came upon him.

“There’s something that should be guarded

more carefully, Mr. Phillipse," he said, handing Dick a folded sheet of paper.

Dick unfolded it, and saw that it was a hand-printed copy of the potter's verse. It was not the original, but was a painstaking imitation of it; so it seemed to Dick.

"And why?" he said.

"Why?" echoed Suydam surprisedly. "Do you think it quite all right that that should be in the possession of that one-legged scoundrel? I found it in his pocket."

"That's interesting," said Dick. "But I can relieve your mind if you think that this is the verse written out by Garry Duane; that one is in my box at the Colonia Trust Company in New York. Not the least doubt of it; I have looked at it often enough to know its appearance. This was in his pocket, eh? See how carefully it is done—do you suppose it was palmed off on that fellow as the original? This gives the situation another twist."

"How so?"

Dick's thought was that if Tap-tap Tony believed he had the original printing of the potter's verse, he was logically not coöoperating with any one of those individuals who were necessarily in Dick's confidence; they all knew where was the verse printed by Garry Duane. He would not say

that to Suydam, because it would dissipate at once the appearance of sincere trust that he thought it policy to maintain. He was morally certain that the group that included Suydam included a thief and a murderer, as yet undiscovered.

"It shows that this man was aware of the importance of the verse and was probably a confederate of the men who broke the safe open that night," he substituted weakly.

Little Amby—who, in accord with his fixed habit and principle, had disappeared at the first whisper of violence, to reappear when matters were adjusted satisfactorily—was in the pantry pouring himself and the cat Vanity two strengthening drinks; he overheard the conversation in the kitchen.

"My idea," he said, looking fondly at Vanity through his glass, "is that he came here to-night relying on information he got from that verse—it seems to be able to say one thing and mean as many others as a politician. But if he interpreted that verse—without the help of my good friend, Doctor Wessel—he interpreted it with the sandalwood fan. We can take it as an established fact that wherever that fan is now this man has access to it. . . . Good evening, doctor. I see you are among the survivors of Mr. Zittel's six-shooter. Will you join me in pouring a libation to celebrate

our success at arms, and throw a scientific eye over this latest shred of evidence?"

Very little damage was done by the smoke, even to the furniture and draperies. Dick exaggerated it greatly to Nell; he advised her to spend a week or two at the seashore with Florence while the house was being put to rights, and he told her that he had collected an account due the estate, and that she would be spending her own money. He knew that she was nervously exhausted, and that she would have fled the place long since if it were not that she was living on borrowed funds. He had a trusty employee at the shop who would be the better for a few days in the country; he would leave him at Blue Point as custodian.

## CHAPTER XVII

ID you manage to sleep after all the excitement, Mr. Hinkle?" asked Nell at the breakfast table the next morning.

"Like a night watchman, Miss Duane," said Little Amby. "I don't think I as much as opened half an eye all night. There's nothing like this wonderful country air; so cool and delightful. And then the sounds are so musical and tranquilizing. I do love to wake up for just a minute and lie there and listen to the cries of the catbirds in the wee small hours."

"Catbirds? The catbirds don't stay out all night and sing, Mr. Hinkle."

"You don't tell me," said Little Amby. "What was it, then, that I heard crying? It was not annoying in the least—pleasant and soothing—but it kept up all night. I should have said it was a cat, but I wasn't taking chances. Could it have been our little friend Vanity?"

"It was a cat," said Dick. "I heard it several times. I thought the cat had been locked out."

"We never do," said Nell. "I'm so sorry. But where is Vanity? She didn't come to see me this morning."

"I haven't seen her since last night," said Florence.

"I dare say she's been shut up in a closet," said Little Amby. "Somewhere on the top floor, near my room, that's sure."

"I'll find her," said Florence.

"Oh, let me," said Dick, rising hastily to intercept her. He was surprised at the force with which Little Amby's foot, seeking his, blundered into it.

"You men finish your breakfast," ordered Florence, going.

She returned in about five minutes with Vanity in her arms.

"There's my song bird," chuckled Little Amby. "And where did you find her, Mrs. Duane?"

"On the roof outside Lowell's window," she answered, looking reprovingly at Zittel. "He must have closed the window during the night when she was prowling. I don't know how she failed to wake him up with scratching on the pane and crying."

"And you didn't hear anything, Mr. Zittel?" asked Little Amby.

"I heard something scratching around out

there," said Zittel sheepishly, "but I thought that it was only mice in the walls."

Dick asked Little Amby later why he stepped on his foot and detained him, but could get no satisfaction.

"Just an experiment, Phillipse," said the lawyer evasively. "And I am like Doctor Wessel in that I don't care to publish incomplete returns. I have more lines out than you know of, or than it is well you should know of. You're too scrupulous; when I fight, I have a horseshoe in each hand, and you'd make me drop them. I verified an important point with Vanity, and you'll admit it when I explain to you the great cat experiment—another time."

Little Amby's reticence did not please Dick; he did not trust the lawyer greatly. The man's reputation rebuffed trust. The man was known as a trickster, as a cunning and dexterous adviser in illicit affairs. He was the most successful criminal lawyer in New York, but even that success was not based on learning in the law and skill in advocacy. Dick had not sought him out primarily as a lawyer, nor had Little Amby moved to employ himself as such. Dick had gone to him for specific information that should lead him to the sandalwood fan; it seemed to Dick at times that he had been artfully inveigled into the legal

den on Center Street. He had gained Dick's confidence by a show of frankness, and Dick felt ever more strongly that frankness was foreign to the man's nature. The situation was highly anomalous; he had gradually come to accept as his confidant and counselor the lawyer for the man who had robbed him—the lawyer for the murderous Scissors. He was uneasy in such society, the more uneasy because he saw, with a flash of intuition, that he had not sought that society of himself. He had been adopted.

Little Amby, scenting money, had sought it through the wretched Scissors; losing him, he had taken Dick. It was something at least that popular report credited the notorious advocate of Center Street with a single positive virtue—with absolute loyalty to his clients. It was a primitive virtue, a brutish virtue; by popular report, he had it. A creature of appetites unrestrained by morality, a ruling instinct compelled him to subordinate them to the cause he espoused.

Dick stopped in from time to time at the little house in Center Street and was fed consistently with hints that good news was about to break. About three weeks after Little Amby's visit to Blue Point, the lawyer was ready to talk.

"Good news," he said. "I'll give you the less

first: I have a buyer for your Blue Point property."

"At what price?"

"Sixty-six thousand five hundred net to you, all cash over that fifty-thousand-dollar mortgage. That means sixteen thousand five hundred cash. Will you take it?"

"I think I would. Who's your buyer?"

"I can't tell you that. You know him, but, out of a feeling of propriety and fair play, he chooses to come to you as a stranger. It's taken me three weeks to work him up to seventy thousand dollars —the price he is paying. The difference is my lawful commission of five per cent."

"You're getting a commission?"

"Yes, yes. I do nothing for nothing, Phillipse. If you want sixteen five net, there it is for you. I think it's a corking good price. Candidly, Phillipse, I don't think you can get from anybody else a dime for that property over the mortgage. Would you buy for your own use a house so spotted with burglary and murder? I'll tell you what's going to happen to that place if you don't snap this party up: It's going to become a haunted house, mark my words! I'll bet I can buy that mortgage from the bank right now for forty thousand dollars. There's a tip for you: Sign up with this buyer on the quiet, and then go and

throw a scare into the bank and buy the mortgage and pick up a ten-thousand-dollar bill."

"I don't think I'll do that. But I am entirely in favor of selling at the price you name. I think you're right about the market value of the property being badly injured. Did you say you had another piece of news?"

"I've been negotiating with your friend Mr. Wong, of Riverside Drive. When that mob took the sandalwood fan that day, they weren't overlooking a trick, and they cleaned Mr. Wong out of quite a group of personal trinkets at the same time. I worked those things back to him."

"You mean you had his property restored? But how could you manage that since you are not in the confidence of the robbers?"

"Phillipse, what do you suppose private detectives live on? Look at Saracena; I use him quite a little. When I ask him to do a piece of straight detective work in shadowing Zittel, he is so clumsy that Zittel tumbles to him right away, but when I ask him to frame divorce evidence for me, or go out and buy back stolen goods, he can give Sherlock Holmes big and little casino. He brought in Wong Get's belongings as quickly as if he had them home in his trunk."

"I see. But what could Wong Get do for you?"

"Why, as soon as he lost that fan he shot a wire to his people in China, telling them to watch out. I knew he would do that, from what you told me; it was the indicated move. I went to him, squared him, and suggested that he ask his people to send over that print of the fan, or a copy."

"And they did?"

"By return mail. Wong Get needed it in his business, though it will probably not be used in the same way again. He has it in his apartment now, and I've made an appointment for you at eleven to-morrow morning. Go there and have your poetry read.

"Now, as I think you'll learn what Duane did with his money, I advise you to have the doctor, your fellow executor, there with you, and also the chief beneficiaries under the will. That was not Duane's idea; he wanted you to recover the money all by yourself, but we've come a long way since Duane thought out his unfortunate scheme. The money may be gone from where he put it; several wise men have been looking for it. It would be awkward for you if you got advance information and then didn't produce the money."

"I think you're right," agreed Dick. "I'll telephone them and have them in the city to-morrow morning."

At 10:45 A.M. of the next day Dick met the train from Blue Point in the Pennsylvania Station and greeted Nell, Florence and Doctor Wessel. The party entered a cab and then proceeded directly to the Riverside Drive apartment house.

The superintendent of the house was in the main hall and had evidently been awaiting them. Before Dick spoke, the superintendent, who wore a troubled and furtive look, came quickly forward and said in a low tone: "The people for Mr. Wong's apartment? There was a gentleman coming here, and then you may go right up. We're extremely careful, you know, since the apartment was robbed. Ah, here he comes now."

Little Amby entered the hall.

"Everything all right, Mr. Simpson?" he asked the superintendent. "Good morning, doctor; your affair is going along. And good morning to the pearls of Blue Point."

"Oysters would be better, if not so gallant, Mr. Hinkle," smiled Nell. "We're dumb with excitement."

"And how it becomes you," said Little Amby, who seemed to be in excellent humor. He led the way to the elevator.

Wong Get's door was opened by a skinny and bald-headed Chinaman attired in a dressing gown

of black-and-yellow brocade. His little eyes of liquid black twinkled welcomingly as he bowed the visitors in. He showed them into the scantily furnished drawing-room, folded his hands, bowed again, and said in faultless English, "Mr. Wong is not here to-day."

"How's that?" asked Little Amby. "He told us to come."

"He was called away last night, Mr. Hinkle, but that need not trouble you. I will let you have the use of the print."

"That's fine, Mr. Chu. Now I recall that Mr. Wong told me you would take care of us in case he couldn't be present. Did he get nervous? I wouldn't blame him after his experience last time."

"And is the paper here that is to be read?"

"I have it," said Dick, producing the envelope that he had obtained that morning from the Colonia Trust.

"I shall get the print, if you will excuse me," said Mr. Chu, going in the direction of the bedrooms.

He came back with a scroll of parchment, which he spread on a glass-topped wicker table from whose center a section was missing. They gathered about to look. They saw on the creamy parchment what looked like a flat drawing of a

great scallop shell, covered with hundreds of black spots.

"To write with this is more easy, to read is slightly more difficult, than with the talking fan," said Mr. Chu chattily. "If you had waited but another week I would not have required you to come here, and would gladly have given you this print to do as you might. We shall not use that particular fan again. It has had too much publicity and would be dangerous to us. We shall have another fan. However, it has been long in Mr. Wong's family, and he values it sentimentally, and he has offered five hundred dollars for its return. That is another incentive to him to aid you; when it is no longer valuable, except for its intrinsic worth, to anyone but him, he trusts it will come back. We shall hold this print as a precaution, for yet another week, and then we shall destroy it."

He turned on an electric bulb that was under the center of the table. The parchment became translucent; the black spots stood out like insects in air.

"And now, sir, will you please impose the paper?"

He got up, walked away from the table to a window, and stood with folded hands, looking down into the street, Dick took his place, placed

the potter's verse on the shining parchment, and moved it about to make its half circle coincide with the curve described on the parchment. The others bent over him absorbedly.

"The——' Wait! You had it then!" exclaimed Little Amby. "Back again. There! 'The great roll is lost——' Hold it steady, Phillipse!"

"Oh, heavens," sighed Florence Duane.

"Right, Phillipse. I can pick out every letter that shows. 'The great roll is lost,' is what the top line reads. There; see below! 'Tell—my—wife—and—s-i-s-t-e-r n-e-l-l.' Tell my wife and sister Nell. And the last line: 'g-d-u-a-n-e.' G. Duane!" He uttered a low and philosophical whistle and brought out his gold cigarette case. "It seems that I've had a lot of work for nothing. Well, it was a gamble, Phillipse. Better luck next time."

Dick was staring at the paper. Florence was leaning heavily on his shoulder, picking out the damning letters that, alone of the verse, were revealed by the light under the glass.

"Poor boy," said Nell whisperingly. "Poor, poor Garry." Florence's hand shot down to the paper, snatched it from the parchment and crumpled it convulsively.

"And what about me?" she screamed. Her eyes

were glaring and her face was spotted white and red. Her teeth showed as her nails dug into the paper; she ripped it apart, once and again. "Poor boy! Poor drunkard. This is what I get for living with a disgusting drunkard and playing nurse to a silly blind woman. Thrown out on the streets without a dollar at my time of life."

"Florence, stop that wicked talk!" cried Nell.

"Stop tearing that paper anyway," said Dick, jumping up determinedly. "How dare you do that! Here—give it to me." He was too late. Again she tore the fragments of the paper asunder, and then, with a frantic gesture, hurled them from the open window beside which stood the impassive Chu. Dick saw them seized upon by the wind from the river, eddying, separating, rising, falling, whirling. For a moment Dick watched them as they settled in an ever-widening compass toward the street one hundred and twenty feet below. "Now you've done it," he said quietly. "Whether we interpreted that writing aright or not, the search for Garry Duane's money is finished."

Florence sank into a chair, sobbing.

"Nell," she gasped, "don't be angry with me. I couldn't help it. I can never help it."

"And it has been read, sir," said Mr. Chu blandly. "The paper is no longer of value."

"For that matter, the estate is not without substantial assets," put in Little Amby. "Those bequests to the servants appear to be first charges, with priority, but I guess if we give them a battle they'll agree to come in on another basis, and we'll save something. There is still the Blue Point property, and my man stands ready to put up twenty thousand dollars cash for the equity, out of which is to come a commission of thirty-five hundred for the broker. What about it?"

"Do you know of this offer?" asked Dick of Wessel.

"I do," said the psychiatrist.

"And what's your opinion?"

"I shall leave it entirely to you. I decline to pass upon it in any manner, shape or form, but whatever you decide to do, I shall indorse."

"If you feel that way," said Dick, "I'll tell you now that the property will be sold on the terms Mr. Hinkle proposes."

"Good," said Little Amby. "Meet your buyer." He pointed to Doctor Wessel. "I sold it to him that week-end at Blue Point. He decided he could use it and asked me to act as broker, and to keep his identity dark so that you wouldn't be influenced. He couldn't act for himself, since he was one of the executors. I think that will contains a power of sale; come down to my office and

we'll arrange for a transfer to a dummy, who'll turn it over to the doctor. I congratulate you, doctor, on a very good purchase indeed; and you, Phillipse, on getting a lot more than your property is worth."

"I can use it as a branch of my sanitarium," explained Doctor Wessel.

The superintendent was still in the main hall below. "Good day, Mr. Hinkle," he said, going before them officially and holding open the street door.

"Good day, Simpson," said Little Amby, putting into his ready hand a folded bill whose denomination Dick did not see.

## CHAPTER XVIII



ONTRACTS were signed whereby Doctor Wessel agreed to buy the Blue Point property, paying for it as stipulated by Little Amby. Dick was satisfied with the deal, thinking that it would have been a good and advisable one even had the money materialized that was supposed to be the bulk of the estate. To live in a place of the size and character of the Blue Point property meant to live at the rate of twenty to thirty thousand a year; he knew that Garry had spent forty thousand. Such a scale of living was out of the question for people without income except from investments that would not net that much. To do so would be to do as so many American widows and un instructed children do—to live along in blissful ignorance until they suddenly scraped bottom.

But a chance to exercise even that wise providence was denied to Nell and Florence Duane. They were stranded now. The estate owed Dick about five thousand dollars, which he would not get back; the prior bequests of twenty thousand

dollars to the servants would wipe out what could be realized on the sale of the house and furniture. Dick's claim did not take precedence over those of the servants, since he had not advanced the money to the estate for all purposes, but had advanced it to Nell and Florence Duane against their shares in the residuary estate, and there wouldn't be any residuary estate.

In the afternoon following the visit to Wong Get's apartment, he took Nell for a drive in suburban Westchester County; she and Florence were to stop in the city overnight.

"Nell," he said, as he drove along the margin of the Bronx River Parkway, then in process of construction, "I've noticed that you talk of colors as much as anybody does, or nearly. You weren't born blind, then?"

"Oh, no, I was six years old when it happened."

"Fever? I nearly lost my sight when I was eight or nine years old and recovering from a dose of the measles. In those days they didn't guard the eyes after fever as they do now, and I was permitted to lie in bed for weeks during convalescence and read storybooks. Well, do you know, when I got up and went to school, I couldn't read large print? The teacher walloped me merrily and told me she'd have none of my pettishness."

"That wasn't my case, Dick. I don't remember having had any fevers, though I suppose I had them. I wasn't a sickly child; I was extremely nervous, though. My nurse used to tell me the loveliest stories about ghosts and murders, and she generally started them at twilight. I just doted on them—any normal child loves horrors. But the result was that I became a sleepwalker and a screamer in the dark. I dreaded to go to sleep, for I knew that something terrible would be running after me at once.

"We lived then over on the North Shore, between Whitestone and Bayside; soldiers were stationed not far away—Fort Totten, isn't it? It was very lonely about there then; our nearest neighbor was a convent school for little boys, but that was far off—so I remember. There was a road before our house; it skirted the rocky Sound shore, and our house was high up. The road wasn't lighted, and drunken soldiers passed along it frequently; they got drunk in Whitestone.

"Well, this evening my nurse went into the house for a minute, and it occurred to me to wander down onto the road, and while I was there I saw this man coming. He was in civilian clothes; he may have been a soldier out of uniform. But he looked awful. His face was smeared with blood, and one eye was swollen and

black, and he leaned over this way and he leaned over that way, and he lifted his feet high and put his big hands out before him. He was talking and grumbling away to himself. I saw this creature—some poor chap who had been beaten in a fight in Whitestone—and I knew at once that he was a murdered Englishman that my nurse had told me of. I thought he was repeating that horrid little rime that begins, ‘Fee, Fie, Foe, Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman.’ And of course he was the Englishman himself at the same time.

“He saw me standing there with eyes like saucers. With a dreadful laugh, he ran to catch me. And there was my dream come true. I, running madly, hands out, screaming, and behind me this awful creature pounding along, overtaking me. And no help for me anywhere; he was between me and the house, and I was running toward the Sound.

“That’s all. When I came to my senses some hours later, in my own bed and with a smell of medicine about me, I couldn’t see. My sight never came back. The blood cleared out of my eyes after a short time.”

“Just fright!”

“No, not altogether, though the doctors say that the fright had a lot to do with it. I fell there

on the sharp rocks and managed to hit myself back here." Nell laid a hand on the back of her neck just below the head.

"Well, what's the prognosis, as our friend Doctor Wessel says?"

"Dick, they don't seem to know anything about hurts of that sort. If you hit yourself back there, anything is likely to happen to you, and they can't do much of anything about it. That's the base of the brain. Doctor Wessel did everything for me out of friendship for Garry. He says—but he may be saying it only to please me—that my eyes are as good as gold. He has tried to hypnotize me out of it—no, don't laugh; anything Doctor Wessel believes in can't be all bunk, though it may be seven-eighths. Oh, you don't know half of what he believes in yet; he believes in thought transference and mediums and—and, mind you, he's one of the very best in his profession. Everybody admits that. He's written the most wonderful books. I can't read them, as they haven't been printed in Braille, but Garry used to read them to me. He wrote a perfectly horrid book about Bible characters and medieval saints, and I wouldn't let Garry read it to me. I don't want to believe that everybody who is wicked is so because he can't help himself; the corollary of that proposition is that good people can't help

themselves either—and where are you then?"

"Then there's no hope of immediate betterment."

"There's no hope at all, Dick. But that doesn't bother me. I'm sure"—she laughed lightly—"that I'd be lost if I got my sight back now. I'd be a newcomer in the world, having to find my way about all over again."

"What are you going to do, Nell?" he asked bluntly.

"I must learn to earn my living. Helen Keller did it, and she was much worse off than I. I can do it too."

"But right away?"

"I shall go to my aunt—a sister of my father. I've never seen her, but she used to write us years ago. She lives in Kansas City."

"Have you written her about going?"

"Yes."

"Did she answer?"

"Not yet."

"No, and she won't," he said with strange roughness.

"Why not, Dick?"

"You can't expect it of her. People don't act like that. You're a total stranger to her. Is she rich?"

"Oh, no. Her husband was a farmer and he

left her enough to live along on, we understood."

"There you have it. And you think you can walk in on her and say, 'Hello, aunty; I'm your niece from New York, come to stay with you?' Out of the question. She might feel compelled to take you as an act of charity, and then you'd be a shut-in. You'd be a drag on her. How long would she be nice about it? She may have a little feeling for you on account of being your aunt, but I want to tell you, Nell, that love flies out of the window when you try to put it to work. Anyway, she hasn't hastened to answer you, and that's hint enough."

"Please don't talk like that, Dick," she said quietly.

They were silent as he entered Tuckahoe and turned the car up the winding road to the high plateau that lies to the west of the old and picturesque village.

"There's a piece of property up here," he said, "that I'm thinking of buying, and that's really why I drove out here."

"Now you're trying to turn a poor girl's head with flattery, Dick."

"Where you are now," he said, stopping the car before a wrought-iron gate in a tall brick wall, "is just eighteen miles out of the Grand Central. It is the garden spot of the universe—

take it from the village board of trade—with 'steen thousand trains each way every day."

"For the people who want to get out. But, Dick, you sound more like a man who is selling."

"I'm selling right now," he said. He got down, opened the gate and drove over a blue-stoned drive to a new one-story residence of field stone with a long and sloping roof of variegated slate.

"This place is brand-new," he said, helping her out. "A man built it for himself, and made everything of the very best, and after he paid the bills he found that he had spent all his money and couldn't afford to live in it. You'd be surprised how many people do that very thing. So he's willing to sell it for the price of one of those nobby English cottages that they build with a roll of chicken wire, a load of two-by-fours and a barrel of stucco, and that are positively guaranteed to look a hundred years old in a year and four months. This place won't look old in our time, Nell. Full fireproof, stone and steel, and all the rooms on the flat. This is a brick path underfoot, Nell. Over there is a vegetable garden, and that building is a cement chicken house with no accommodations for rats, and there is the flower garden. All level and graded, and all bound round with about five thousand dollars' worth of high brick wall.

"But look at the house. Those windows are plate glass in steel frames. Nothing to paint but a line or two of trim for color. Now come in with me. I want your advice, as you know more about housekeeping than I do. Feel that door—three inches thick, with a little barred grille up above for the owner to look out at his visitors and see if he wants them. This wide hall we're in goes right through to the other side, and the windows back there frame a picture of the flower garden.

"Not many rooms, but big ones. This is the living room—thirty-five feet long. I can get a grand piano in here and it won't look as if it was in storage. That's the dining room, and behind it are the kitchen and two maids' rooms. These are the master's chambers over here—just three. But aren't they beauties?"

"I know they are beautiful," she said. "I see it with your eyes."

"I'm tired of living in the city, Nell. It's getting so crowded and smoky and noisy that a human being doesn't belong there. I was born there, and my people before me away back, but it was a different place then, and I don't mean when they used to pasture the cow in Times Square either. As a matter of statistics, there are mighty few New Yorkers left in the old town

—mighty few that can afford to get out. They're all in the suburbs now. The richest of them keep residences there so that they don't have to put up in hotels during the short winter season, but they really live outside. I'm waking up. This looks mighty good to me. It only has one drawback."

"What's that, Dick?"

"It's lonesome for a man that's used to New York. Well, I have a cross-eyed aunt that lives in Plainfield with eleven cats, and I suppose she'd come with her family. The twelve of them would be company, at any rate. Do you like it, Nell?"

"Very much."

He took her hands. "Nell," he said, "I'm going to buy this place for you and me. I want you for my wife."

He watched the color coming into her face.

"Yes, Nell?"

She breathed deeply, but stood silent and immobile.

"Nell! But, please, Nell, don't cry! What's there to cry about? Don't be silly." He couldn't resist the urge to put his arms about her and to kiss the still face down which the tears were flowing. "Stop it," he commanded, "and please say yes."

She moved her head slowly and determinedly as she pressed him away.

"No," she whispered. "No—and no, and no. I won't do it, Dick. I shouldn't do it, and I won't do it. I decided long ago that I would never marry. It would not be fair and right. I'd be a burden and—Dick, we won't let love come in, and it will never fly out our window."

"Oh, pshaw, Nell, quote me right or not at all."

"You said it, Dick, and you were right."

"I did not say it!"

She laughed tremulously and pressed his hands. "Our first quarrel. Dick, it's no, and it's going to be no; but kiss me, please, just this once."

"And now," she said two minutes later, "show me again that fortified door that you're going to welcome your guests through. We're going back. Let me go, Dick, please."

"I will, and we'll go right out to the car, if you'll promise me something now."

"Blindly?"

"Yes."

"I promise."

"That you'll never, never forgive me if I marry anybody else."

"What a horrid idea—let me go."

"But don't you want me to promise, Nell?"

He opened the door. She paused on the

threshold, moved her head as if to look back into the house, and uttered a short sob.

"Is the car there, Dick?"

"Waiting."

"And we're getting right into it and driving away?"

"Right away."

"Dick, kiss me again."

## CHAPTER XIX

 T occurred to Dick that he had not thanked Wong Get for his courtesy; he called the Chinaman up.

“But I do not understand, Mr. Phillipse,” said Wong Get. “I have no print of that fan and I do not know this Mr. Chu. This is all novel to me. Will you not come here and explain to me?”

“You mean to tell me—” Dick stopped, completely stumped. “I’ll be up there in fifteen minutes.”

He left his office at once and took a cab. As he passed through Center Street he was minded to get out and to march in on Little Amby and demand an instant explanation, but a wholesome respect for the explanatory power of the lawyer held him in the vehicle. He would first arm himself with the facts, and with them in hand he would confront the lawyer and give him a chance to talk under the gun.

The white maid that Dick had seen on the occasion of his first visit opened the door for him

now; her master appeared at once. Dick told him of his visit to the apartment in the company of Little Amby and the people from Blue Point.

"I do not know this Mr. Hinkle," said Wong Get. "To my knowledge, the man never spoke to me in his life. Some vile deception has been worked upon you, Mr. Phillipse. The only word of truth in all that was told you is that I was called out of the city. But it was not on the preceding evening, but several days before. I returned only Monday morning. You say the superintendent permitted you to enter? But he must have known that I was not here. I shall ask about that at once." He went to a telephone. "Tell the superintendent to come to this apartment immediately. Tell him not to delay. I am waiting." He hung up. "I know no Mr. Chu," he said, and Dick could see that he was very angry. "Was he Chinese? Yet I do not know him. Ah, there is our man now. I shall accuse him and then hand him over to the police as a housebreaker." He went to the door and spoke to a man who had rung the bell. He called Dick. "Is this the man, Mr. Phillipse?"

Dick went into the foyer. The superintendent who had answered Mr. Wong's summons was not the man whom Dick had seen on his two other visits.

"You mean Simpson, sir," said the new superintendent. "He was fired almost a month ago, after this apartment was robbed. I don't think it was his fault, but the owners fired him."

"He was here during the last ten days."

"Yes, sir. He was kept on until he located himself."

"There is that much," said Wong Get, after dismissing the superintendent. "It is evident that the individual who worked this deceit on you is the fellow you call Little Amby."

"If he did, and if he had any plan to get hold of that paper, his scheme miscarried in that respect. The paper was destroyed here. It's gone."

"Ah, then you have lost interest in the sandalwood fan?"

"I'd like to have it to shake under the nose of that little crook when I'm telling him what I learned of you. If you don't proceed against him, I shall. I'd like to get hold of that fan as evidence against him, to have him punished."

"You shall have it for that purpose," said Wong Get—"with which I am entirely in sympathy."

"You have it?"

"I have it. It came to me most unexpectedly. Last Monday afternoon I was called to the telephone. A man's voice on the wire asked me for

an interview on a matter of importance that he could disclose. Such a request is not uncommon with me, and I told him to come. But instead of a man coming, it was a woman who appeared. She told me that she had heard that I had lost a valuable fan and that I would pay five hundred dollars for its return, and that she had found such a fan in the Subway. I agreed that I had lost a fan, and asked to see what she had found. Then she produced the sandalwood fan. I took it, made an excuse, and went into another room to call the police. I was not unfair to her. If it proved that she had found the fan as she had said, I should have paid her what she asked. But when I came back she was gone."

"Frightened off."

"It is possible."

"What did she look like?"

"A poor person—poorly dressed and with a heavy veil. She spoke in so low a tone and so hurriedly that I could not judge of her condition. It seemed to me that she was the wife or mistress of the thief. But you shall see it now." He went back toward the bedrooms, returned, and laid a folded fan in Dick's hands. "What you call the sandalwood fan," he said.

With melancholy curiosity Dick spread the fan. It had come too late. The message that it was

to decipher was lost. He admired it as a connoisseur, but with reluctance.

"The guards are sandalwood," said Wong Get, pleased by his scrutiny, "and the sticks, twenty-four in number, may also be of sandalwood, though one cannot know that for sure, as they are painted and lacquered. You see that the sticks are carved and pierced in the semblance of feathers—of feathers of the argus pheasant. The painting, too, reproduces the coloring of the bird. The design is adapted to our purpose because of the multitude of spots—the speckling that gives the bird its peculiar name. These spots are represented by the hundreds of round or oval holes that pierce the blades. They are arbitrarily spaced, but if you will take a line through the fan at its greatest width, you will cut no less than seventy-two. The wood is very thin, but the lacquer wherewith the old fan maker covered it is iron hard and gives it strength. Do not be afraid to spread it; the joinery is strong, and it fastens at last by locking the steels on the guards."

"It is beautiful," said Dick. "I shall take the best care of it. But pardon me if I am surprised that you should trust me with it."

"Ah, there again you heard enough of the truth to make the story plausible. We shall use that fan no longer. We took the risk before, but now

it has become too great. You even tell me that a print was shown you. If it was a print of the fan——”

“That’s so,” exclaimed Dick. “It may not have been a print of this fan at all.”

“That is possible. But you say it read the paper. It was, then, prepared from the paper.”

“I can’t believe that. The paper was not out of my sight except when it was in my safe-deposit box in the Colonia Trust. I can see that one in possession of a replica of the paper could have got up a print that would interpret the paper as he would have it, but what end could he have in deceiving me? I did not have the sandalwood fan and he could not hope to trick me out of it.”

“The proposed end might have been to cause you to abandon your efforts to find the fan. That is the effect that the deception had on you, and it is the inevitable one. Ah, we begin to see that the fan may still interest you. I intrust it to you. If it proves that this fellow Little Amby has tricked you, command me at any time and I shall gladly aid you to punish him.”

Dick returned directly to Center Street and to the dingy little house opposite the Tombs. He was on a privileged footing there; the sour-looking managing clerk sent in his name and he was received without delay by the sinister little shyster.

"Hello, Phillipse," called Little Amby familiarly.

"Mr. Hinkle," said Dick with grim formality, "I have just had a talk with Wong Get, of Riverside Drive."

"Oh, he's in the city again?"

"He is. He told me that he doesn't know you, never saw you or spoke to you, never arranged for you to come to his apartment for any purpose whatsoever."

"That's so," said Little Amby, alert but unafraid. "Let me ask you one thing before you go on: Have you told anybody else that you have seen Wong Get?"

"I'm not here to answer questions, but to ask them. However, I'll tell you that I did not talk to anybody else."

"Good," said Little Amby gratulatingly. "Then you haven't done any harm. All right, Phillipse, what do you want to know? I'm your witness."

"You know what I want. And if you have anything to say, you'd better say it. I've talked to nobody yet, but when I leave here I'll talk to the district attorney; and from all I hear, the district attorney will be mighty glad to have a clean-cut case against you. You may be very clever, but I'm not exactly a fool myself, even if you've

played me for one; and I'm not the nobody you may have taken me for. If you have anything to say, say it quick, for when I walk out of that door I'll be on my way to put you where you belong."

"Careful, Phillipse. If you came here to swap recriminations with me, I won't let you lose my time. I don't indulge in that sort of thing. There's no percentage in it. . . . Is that the sandalwood fan?"

"That's the fan! And the thing that your accomplice Chu showed me was no print of it. Wong Get had no print."

"Thank me for getting it for you, Phillipse."

"Thank you?"

"Why, certainly! Who do you suppose worked it back to Wong Get? Nobody else but Little Amby. Don't you remember my accomplice Chu—I adopt your pretty term—announcing that Wong Get would pay five hundred dollars for the return of the fan? And wasn't it that offer that brought the fan?"

"Poppycock. You're very clever at devising explanations. You didn't want that fan to go back to Wong Get."

"Certainly not. I wanted to get the fan myself—for us. I had Saracena working on it, trying to buy it back. I sent him after Tap-tap

Tony, who, I believed, could get the fan. Saracena was in here only yesterday afternoon to tell me that Tap-tap couldn't deliver, that he didn't have the fan. You don't need to think that it was Tap-tap who sent the fan direct to Wong Get; he wouldn't do anything so amateurish. He would go through a private detective, according to the best practice. Tap-tap, it proves now, didn't have the fan and couldn't get it. I don't know how he lost touch with it, but it was an amateur that brought it back and claimed the reward."

Dick was impressed, but ineradicably suspicious. "That may be. But it is still as plain as the nose on your face that this plot was directed against me."

"Together with others, my boy, and for your own good. See here; the problem was to persuade an unknown party to let go of the fan; I suspected that party was Tap-tap Tony. The only way to make him let go was to destroy the fan's secret value. Do you get the idea? We knew why he was holding the fan—in hope of getting Duane's money by it. Very well; we must convince him that there wasn't any money. We did that. The evidence in this case is to the effect that information has leaked to your opponents through one of the four people who were in

Wong Get's that morning—I won't bother to plot it out for you—and I include you among the others."

"Include me?"

"Phillipse, it's the hardest thing to discover such a leak. But when you have localized it to a certain extent, you can proceed to supply false information and watch it show up at the other end. That's what I did here. You helped me immensely. You were genuinely convinced that the money was gone, and you spread that conviction as you could not have done if you had been party to it—*particeps criminis* is the word you would have chosen a minute ago. Phillipse, I may be doing you an injustice, but I don't think you're a good liar."

"Then this Chu was your assistant?"

"My accomplice, yes. I imported him from Philadelphia. I have a connection on Race Street over there."

"But how did you get the use of the apartment?"

"Through Simpson. He had just been fired and a fifty-dollar bill looked big and handsome. He told me that Wong Get was frequently absent for days, and I laid my wires and waited until he stepped out. . . . May I see the fan?" Dick gave it to him. He opened it and spread it out

on his desk amid a litter of papers, thrusting them aside. He bent over it studying it with close attention. "I think we made a very fair copy," he murmured, almost abstractedly—"as good as could have been made, considering that we never saw this. I'll bet that fan is worth real money."

"What was the print made from?"

"From the paper that you had in the bank."

"But that was never out of my possession."

"Oh, yes, it was—yes, it was," said Little Amby slowly, still studying the fan.

"When?"

"That day in the Great Central grille on Eighty-second Street. Remember?"

"I remember I met you there and that you looked at the paper."

"And put it right back in the envelope?"

"Yes."

"Ah, but I didn't. I gave it to Cohen. That's what he came with me for. He took it right out and traced it. Then it was put back in the envelope and handed over to you, and we were all set to make the print that would make the verse say what we wanted."

Dick looked keenly at the lawyer, flushed with sudden anger and jumped up. He seized the fan. He would have snatched it away if he did not fear that it would ill endure rough handling.

"What have you been doing there? You've been reading something with this fan right under my very eyes! What is that you have there?"

"Phillipse," growled Little Amby, with that sudden blaze in his black eyes and menace in his voice that had so often broken through the poise of a hostile witness, "I'm managing this case, and I answer to nobody except for results. It's for a client to tell me what he wants done; it's for me to do it. I can tell you that we're just coming to the crisis in this case now, and it's going to be touch and go. A false move and the stopper is pulled and all our work goes down the pipe. The fact that you bring me the fan instead of me bringing it to you is only a detail; I worked it into your hands. Now, I've talked a lot to you because you're an odd fish and very much troubled for fear you may not give everybody a square deal, including people that want to knife you, but I don't propose to share my responsibility with anybody. On the question of whether I know what I'm about, consider the fact that we have in this room at this very minute a duplicate of the potter's verse that was penned by Garry Duane, and also the one and only sandalwood fan."

"Then let's have the message!"

"Do you want it now?" smiled Little Amby.

"You don't know where the fan and the duplicate message have been during the last few days. Maybe they came together. You wouldn't hear of it. If Garry Duane's money was found, the fan would still have gone back to Wong Get; its usefulness would have been gone. But if you take the message now, if you have advance information, and if it should prove that the plant has been raised——"

"Hinkle," grumbled Dick, "if you think a man's honest, you appeal to his honesty, and you're just as clever in appealing to a crook. You worked me for your own ends once before with that same argument."

"It's as good as ever, Phillipse. Come, you want to be in a position to lift your right hand and swear that you had no advance information, no matter whether you've been beaten to the money or not."

"Have you the duplicate there?"

Little Amby shuffled the papers on his desk, lifted one into view, and Dick saw a copy of the potter's verse.

"This is it. Do you want it?"

Dick hesitated. He felt the force of the argument against his seeking Garry Duane's money except in concert with his fellow executor and the beneficiaries under the will; he felt it, know-

ing that it had been advanced disingenuously.

"First, answer me one plain question," he bargained. "I realize that what you have done, however little its method appeals to me and however little it flatters my intelligence, has resulted in putting the tricks into our hands. . . . Is there any form of statement or affirmation that is binding on you?"

"There is," said Little Amby, and if he spoke too well of himself, he was himself deceived, for there was fierce and genuine pride in his voice. "I never welshed on a bet; I never ran out on a friend; I never beat a client!"

"Do you know where Garry Duane's money is?"

"Phillipse, I'll answer that literally. Construe it strictly. I do not—on my word as a sportsman."

"I'll take that," grumbled Dick. "Let's proceed in your way. What's the next step?"

"The next step, Phillipse, is like unto the last. We're going to assemble the interested parties and impart to them the glad intelligence, and make our final and supreme bid for the fortune secreted by Garry Duane, and our critical effort to break the true story of his death. We have the cards now, and we're going to put them down

with a slam. Where are the parties? Can you get them together?"

"In a day or two. The ladies are at Saltaire just now; I can shoot them a wire. To come here?"

"To Blue Point. Fortunately, Wessel doesn't take title for another four weeks"—Little Amby was consulting his desk book—"four weeks tomorrow. I can't give you a date right now, but I want to be there. I must make arrangements to get away. I'll try to make it Friday, but I can't promise that the other side will agree to put over a trial I have on for that day. Who's at Blue Point now, if anybody?"

"I have a man there."

"Trustworthy?"

"Absolutely."

Little Amby picked up the duplicate of the potter's verse, and put it into his safe. "Until Friday, Phillipse."

## CHAPTER XX

ICK had the talk with Little Amby in Center Street on Wednesday, September eighth. On the following day, at about six o'clock in the evening, he was called to the telephone in his apartment in Berkeley Chambers. His man was calling him from Blue Point.

"Larkin, Mr. Phillipse. Excuse me, but it's all right about that wire, is it? You told me to be pretty careful."

"What wire?"

"The wire you sent me just now."

"I didn't send you any wire."

"One came from you. The telephone company just called me up and said there was a wire from you. I haven't got it here, but it said, 'Meet the 6:15 and 6:47 at Blue Point with car without fail. Richard Phillipse.' I barely had time to call you, but I thought I would give you a ring and be sure. I'm glad I did. You didn't wire, eh?"

"Certainly not. The chances are nobody wired. It's a trick to get you out of the house for an

hour. You stay right where you are unless I telephone. Good work, Larkin. Have you got a pistol?"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't use it unless you absolutely have to, and then don't be afraid. I'll back you up. Let nobody in the house at all. Don't take that chain off the door as you value your life. Turn on all the lights. You had better give the police a call and tell them about it, and have a man stay with you to-night. I'm very well satisfied with you, Larkin; you've acted just like I thought you would. Call me in the morning."

Dick called the Blue Point house after an hour. "Mr. Phillipse, Larkin. Well, what happened?"

"Nothing, sir. I have a constable here with me, and he's going to stay."

"Tell him I'll take care of him if he stays awake. I don't think you'll be bothered now, though. Whoever gave you that call was probably waiting in the South Country Road to see you come out."

Before Dick went to his office on Friday, he was called up by Little Amby: "Hello, Phillipse. Can you go down to Blue Point to-day?"

"Yes, I have everything waiting on you. I have notified the ladies at Saltaire to expect a

summons, and I can have them over at Blue Point in two hours."

"Fine. Get them over there at once. I've got an afternoon off and we'll use it to close up the Duane matter. Will you meet me at the Blue Point house at half-past two? . . . Good. . . . What's that? . . . No, thank you. I'm going down in my own car. Like to have you, but there's room only for my driver and me. Half-past two, Phillipse, and bring a rabbit's foot!"

At a quarter after two, Dick swung into the Duane drive. He saw several cars in the circle behind the house. To his surprise, he was greeted by Little Amby.

"You need a new car, Phillipse!" called the lawyer jokingly.

"I didn't loaf any," said Dick.

"Turn it in and get a real boat. Look at Tug over there; he came so fast he's all worn out. . . . Hey, Tug, snap out of it!"

The big bruiser who was the doorkeeper of the little house on Center Street was tilted back in a chair on the Duanes' wide porch. His hard little straw hat on his sunken nose, a dead cigarette in his mouth, his big yellow shoes on the railing, he was dozing.

"Never you mind Tug, boss."

"Get up," said Little Amby, nudging his plug-

ugly as he might stir a lazy dog. "Go around the corner where you won't be noticed. The way you spread yourself around here, somebody'll come up and give you the bill for the taxes. Come on in, Phillipse; everybody's here. That means Miss Duane, too, in case you've forgotten her."

Little Amby was under pressure and inclined to effervesce. Dick's nerves tightened in sympathy. There was a moment of drama approaching. He entered the living room, greeted Suydam, Wessel, Zittel and Florence Duane, and seated himself by Nell. She was pale and collected and was toying nervously with the small black hand bag in her lap.

"I imagine everybody knows what we are here for," said Little Amby, taking charge of the proceedings. "We have to impart, to anyone who is not informed, that we have recovered the sandalwood fan and a duplicate of the verse that was written out by Mr. Duane. We are now going to read the message that he hid with such extraordinary care as nearly to defeat his own object. Lest we criticize Mr. Duane in our minds for having put us to a world of trouble to effect something that could have been done with simplicity, let us remember that all the difficulties and complications ensued because Mr. Duane was—interrupted. Had this fan and paper come into the

hands of his friend and executor, as he intended, his object of protecting his estate from an unjust attack would have been brought about quietly and easily."

"Well, let's get ahead," said Suydam restively.

"And the speeches afterward," said Zittel, grinning to take the sting from his thrust.

"But why send for us, Mr. Hinkle?" said Doctor Wessel. "We are already acquainted with the message."

"But we're not, my dear doctor. We ask forgiveness when we tell you now that the message that was read to you in the Chinaman's apartment on Riverside Drive was one that never occupied the mind of Mr. Duane."

"It wasn't the real paper?" exclaimed Florence, staring at Dick.

"It was the real paper, but not a print of the real fan," said Little Amby, pleased as ever to exhibit his successful trickery. "The message was suggested to us by the researches of Doctor Wessel in the field of numerology. Being in possession of the real paper, we were able to make a print to fit and to read what we would. Our object was to induce the holder of the fan to part with it. Pardon me? . . . Oh, come right in, Miss Kennedy, you have a twelve-thousand-dollar interest in this thing."

"In any event, here is the fan and here is a duplicate of the paper that Mrs. Duane destroyed a bit thoughtlessly. . . . Mr. Suydam, I take it that I am speaking with your kind permission. I am here in the character of *prochain ami*, as we say in the law, and not as attorney for the executors. They have one already, and a thoroughly competent one."

"Go right ahead, Mr. Hinkle," said the small-town lawyer, mollified by the compliment from the famous metropolitan advocate.

"Here is the paper, and Mr. Phillipse will produce the fan. We came to exchange properties in quite an amusing way, and I'll tell you of it later at leisure. . . . I know you'll find it funny, Mr. Zittel. Get set for one of those good old stomach laughs." He placed the paper on a table; Dick imposed the fan on it. "Not so good," muttered Little Amby, peering. "Here, let's hold it against the window. My eyes aren't what they used to be."

He put the paper against a pane and again Dick sought to make the traced outline of the fan coincide with that of the original. "Right!" called Little Amby.

"'The e-a'-over there at the end!—'s-t.' 'The east,' is the first line!" cried Florence Duane.

"Wonderful eyes," murmured Little Amby.

"‘Vent’ is the word on the line below!” called Lowell Zittel. “‘Vent in’—The east vent in—”  
“‘My den.’”

“We called the study his den,” said Florence. “The east vent in the den? Oh, I get it. The study was made by throwing two servants’ rooms together—knocking out the partition—and so there’s a hot-air vent in the east wall and one in the west. That proves it’s the study, too. I guess he couldn’t get the letters for study. Poor, poor Garry. Can you read more?”

“‘A wire,’ ” offered Suydam.

“‘Ring!’ ” called Zittel.

“I think the last line spells ‘pull’—yes, that’s it.”

“The east vent in my den—a wire ring—pull’—that’s all there is to it.”

“Let’s go,” urged Lowell Zittel, moving to leave the room.

“If you’ll adopt my suggestion,” said Little Amby sharply, “you’ll stay here and leave this last step to be made by the interested parties—the parties in interest, to use the legal phrase.”

“But Lowell’s interested,” protested Florence Duane.

“Not as a matter of law, if you’ll pardon me,” said Little Amby, bowing. “The beneficiaries, the executors, and the attorneys.”

"Oho, so you are an attorney for somebody after all," snapped Lowell Zittel.

Little Amby's eyelids flickered. "Mr. Zittel, that remark would win you a reputation as a humorist on Broadway."

"He's my personal attorney," said Dick curtly. "Coming, Nell?"

"No," she said in a low voice. "I'll wait here."

The persons named by Little Amby went to the rear stairs behind the servants' hall. They crowded up the narrow stairs and found themselves in the dark and quiet study where two men had died violent and inexplicable deaths.

"That thing about the vent will appeal to all of us," said Little Amby. "I think all of us were here the night that Tap-tap Tony gave the heating plant the smoke test. Let's see—where is east and west? I'm a stranger around here—a 'city cuss in rure,' if that's Latin. If it isn't, I pass, as I never learned any other foreign language enough to be chummy with a waiter. East vent—this must be it."

He maintained a flow of cheap patter as he took off the iron grill that covered the register in the east wall; he had brought a screw driver with him. His obvious nervousness made Dick wonder, and affected him with growing suspicion.

"I see the wire!" called Florence. "It was hooked into the grill. See it?"

The pierced front came out. There was a wire, going down into the flue. Little Amby pulled it, and a small wooden box of the size of a ten-cent box of biscuits came into view. Dick put out his hands for it.

"Don't touch it!" ordered Little Amby snarlingly. He drew the box out by the wire and placed it on the desk, motioning everybody back. "Look, listen and stop," he said.

With the point of the screw driver, he slipped back a pin that secured the box, and, still using the same instrument with delicacy, tipped back the lid.

## CHAPTER XXI

 E stepped back. "Go ahead, Phillipse." There were in the box a small sheaf of bank notes and a typewritten sheet. Dick took them out. He counted the bank notes first, and announced: "Thirty-seven hundred dollars."

"Thirty-seven—hundred!" gasped Florence Duane. Dick lifted the typewritten sheet.

"Let's have it, Phillipse," snapped Little Amby. Dick read it aloud:

*"Friend Dick: When you read this I will be with the great majority, and past all worrying. The money is all gone but this small sum. I lost it speculating in Wall Street, and it went like a dream—two hundred thousand dollars in less than a week. I speculated under a false name, so you will never be able to trace it.*

"But there is one thing worries me and that is a debt of honor I owed my friend Lowell Zittel, and I have saved this sum out of the wreck to clear my name as a sportsman. It would not be

recognized in law, being a gambling debt, and void under Section 992 of the Penal Law, and he could not enforce it against my estate. And that is why——”

Dick tossed this unconvincing document on the desk contemptuously and frowned blackly at Little Amby.

“What is this thing anyhow, Hinkle?” he growled threateningly. “What kind of a game are you trying to work on us now?”

“What do you mean?” blustered Little Amby.

“I mean what I say! I think you wrote that thing yourself. I know—if these people don’t—that you read that message before we did—days ago. And I believe you came here ahead of us.”

“It’s true!” cried Florence Duane furiously. “That thing is a lie. Garry never knew Lowell; Lowell never lent him a cent!”

“He certainly did know him,” protested Little Amby. “Why, Zittel called him up three times on the telephone, right in this house. I got proof of that.”

“You have not, you fool!” she screamed, beside herself. “Lowell Zittel called me up—called me! I’m the one he knew!”

“What about the checks your husband gave him?” Little Amby shot out a taunting finger.

"What about the dozens of small checks Duane gave him on account—drawn to Cash? There's proof."

"I gave him those checks—every one of them—for—for—Lowell made up that note himself because—"

She stopped. The color went from her face; her mouth opened. The room was very still.

"Because?" invited Little Amby softly. His eyes were gleaming. He moved to advance on her, and halted as if her neighborhood was dangerous. "Because a detective had discovered enough to prove your secret friendship, and he wanted to deny he knew you—wanted to throw the whole guilt on you for the murder of your husband."

"He can't. Oh, he can't!"

"He can. He has done it. I'll prove it. He has said in the presence of witnesses that the murder shot was fired by you from"—he threw out a hand toward the bookcase beside him—"the closet hidden there."

"It's not true. I do not even know of such a place!"

"Where did you find the cat that morning? You said it was outside Zittel's window. He has said you found it in the closet—that you ran there to get it because you were afraid its mewing

would disclose your guilty secret. Did Zittel lie when he said that?"

"He must have told that," she said whisperingly—"he must have told that."

She fell into her murdered husband's chair and buried her face in her hands.

"As to the box, Phillipse," said Little Amby, "I wouldn't let you touch it because I wanted to preserve the finger marks on it. It was well smoked. The finger prints are those of Nell Duane. She's sitting down in the living room now, with the original contents of that box in a bag on her lap." He bent over Florence Duane like an avenging demon. "It was your money that paid Scissors the gunman to come here and kill your husband. And when he wouldn't come quickly enough, you did it yourself."

"I did not! It was he who paid the money to the man called Tap-tap Tony for somebody to do it! I didn't do it—I swear I didn't do it! Dick—Doctor Wessel, don't let him talk to me like this! I was at a friend's house playing bridge with lots of people! I—I—" She was suddenly cold and calm. She rose from her chair and faced Little Amby; there was something awe-inspiring about her, noble. "God help me," she said slowly and evenly. "I'll tell the truth."

"Who fired the shot?"

Her lips moved, but she didn't live to speak the name. A jet of flame and smoke shot from the bookcase she was facing, and for the third time the study threw back the explosion of a pistol.

There was a hissing intake of breaths. The men stood motionless, numbed with horror, with the natural human horror that results from offering the supreme violence to a woman. They moved slowly and hesitatingly toward the body on the floor. And in that moment of inaction they might have heard the sound that had come to the keen ears of Nell Duane in that midnight of May twenty-first—the muffled noise of running feet. Dick was the first to recover himself. He threw himself on the bookcase, hurling books aside.

"Not that way!" cried Little Amby. "You can't go that way! Downstairs—but he won't get away! Tug is waiting to take him!"

"Where downstairs? Where?"

"That closet goes through into the hall on the top floor."

Dick bolted for the stairs, caromed from the wall at the turn, and was down to the ground floor in a matter of seconds; but even as he was passing through the pantry into the living room he heard Nell screaming, and then a bull-like bellow. He darted through the living room and burst out onto the front porch. It was empty. A car was

moving in the drive, slowly gathering speed. Behind it, catching it, at its rear wheel, at its running board, was Little Amby's burly bouncer; even as Dick watched, Tug Gaffney went up and into the car headfirst, diving.

And then Dick had sprung down the steps to Nell. She was lying on the ground under the porte-cochère. Her eyes were closed. He cried her name, stooped and swung her into his arms and carried her up the steps again.

When the other men reached them he was kneeling beside her where she lay on a couch in the living room; he was talking to her, patting her still face.

"Nell—Nell!"

Little Amby went out onto the porch. "Got him, Tug?"

"Got him, boss!"

"What are you doing out here?"

"Well, boss, I guess I was catching up on a little sleep. You might be able to sit up and drive all night and begin the next day before breakfast, but me—I got to get mine. So I was relaxing a little when I heard the dame holler, and then I seen this bug taking after her across the porch like a rabbit. They come out that door back there, so they nearly had to jump over me. And the dame misses her jump on those steps and goes

down in a heap, and with that I lammed after this bug. Well, I had to see the dame wasn't killed, so he got a little start on me."

"Nell! Come, dear; wake up."

Nell's eyes opened. For a moment they were vacant, with the pupils widely expanded as always, black as midnight; and then the gray irises drew ever more closely over the pupils. Dick was silent and tense, looking into her eyes; he divined what had happened, but he didn't dare believe it.

"You are Dick," she said. "I can—see—Dick!" She was clinging to him. His arms were about her. "I heard the shot and I heard him coming, and I knew what he was coming for. He was coming for me. And then he was in the room and I was running—running."

"Keep Zittel outside, Tug," called Little Amby softly. "He might frighten her again."

## CHAPTER XXII



ND now, if we may have the attention of both executors for a moment, we'll examine these papers," said Little Amby.

"Pardon me," said Dick, but his eyes recurred almost at once to Nell again, and the rapt smile returned to his face.

"I think my securing of advance information on this matter was justified by the event," said the little lawyer self-satisfiedly. "Phillipse played the part that I allotted to him to the life, a whole lot better than he might have played it if he had known he was only speaking a piece. To surprise an incriminating statement out of Mrs. Duane, on whom I chose to work, thinking her a more likely subject than Zittel, it was necessary to substitute something for what Duane put in the box. I tried to get at the box yesterday, but Phillipse's man was too clever. So I came here early to-day, went with Miss Duane to the study, and had her take out that box, open it and abstract the papers.

To make the record plain, since Phillipse thought I was out to do him, I didn't touch the tip of a finger to the box or papers. You can see Miss Duane's finger prints—her fingers were blackened by the soot on the box—all over both. I then put in the box what I wanted to be found there—that thirty-seven hundred dollars is mine, gentlemen—and restored it to the vent. I knew that Zittel would go to that hidden closet if he was told to stay out of the room. All I expected was that he would slip downstairs and make a drive to take the bag from Miss Duane; and I thought I had a man on guard there, and not a sleeper."

"Then you knew that Zittel had killed Duane?" asked Suydam as Little Amby opened the papers that had been in the box.

"He showed a guilty conscience when he found a detective was checking him up. But I had it on him before that. Scissors Lafetra told me that Zittel's story of meeting him on the road was all the bunk. He had never seen Zittel before. But Zittel knew that Scissors had been in the house that night. He had made a deal with Tap-tap Tony to have Duane killed; when the man didn't show up, Zittel did the job himself. And then he found out that the money and fan were missing, and that a man had been seen in the house.

He figured that his chestnuts had been stolen; he went after Tap-tap Tony, who put him onto Scissors. He had Scissors arrested to try and frighten the loot out of him. As to how I cinched the case against Mrs. Duane: When I discovered the hidden closet, I took the cat and put her in there and closed her up, announced that she was lost somewhere up there, and waited to see who would run to take her out before her noise betrayed her location. And Mrs. Duane appealed to Zittel to back up her story of where the cat was."

"But Zittel tried to kill this Tap-tap Tony later."

"Because he had no more use for him, and he was a danger. He used Tap-tap Tony to get the fan—you met Zittel there, Phillipse, when he was frightened by the detective—and then he planned to betray him. He probably told Tap-tap Tony that he had the paper, showed him something that he had fixed up to read with the fan, and maneuvered the bandit into the house. I imagine he planned to kill him right in the hidden closet, or coming out of it; he would have the fan, and Duane's murder would be fastened on Tap-tap Tony. . . . But let's get ahead here first. Here we have an affidavit. I'll read it, if agreeable:

"STATE OF NEW YORK, ss.

COUNTY OF NEW YORK

"Garret Kipp Duane of Blue Point, New York, being first duly sworn, deposes as follows. That on May 17, 1920, he deposited in the Mauritius Mortgage & Trust Company in New York the sum of two hundred and ten thousand dollars—\$210,000—to the account of D. K. Garret. That said D. K. Garret is none other than deponent, who chose, for good and sufficient reasons, to so conceal his identity. That deponent informed the bank officials that deponent was going abroad for an indefinite stay, and that if they failed to hear from him within a year they were to communicate with Richard Phillipse of West Eighty-fifth Street, New York City; and, failing to find said Richard Phillipse, were to communicate with Miss Nell Duane of Blue Point, New York.

"*[Signed]* GARRET KIPP DUANE.

"Sworn to before me

this 17th May 1920

"WILLIAM LIESEGANG, *Notary Public.*

"New York County, Cert. Filed Bronx County."

"Short and sweet," said Little Amby. "Here are some authenticating documents and examples of the signature of this supposititious D. K. Garret. There's nothing to do but to go and take over the money. The bank will probably want a court

order directing them to pay the money over to the executors. Since this is in New York County, I'll attend to the order if Mr. Suydam is agreeable."

"So the money was not hidden in the house at all!"

"I was prepared to be surprised if it was," said Little Amby. "Duane was a man of too much sense; he knew what banks were made for. He put the money where it would be safe, and whence it would return eventually to his estate if anything slipped up. All he hid out was proof of his identity with Garret. His idea was to enable Phillipse to discover these papers and take over the deposit at once after the lawsuit was disposed of."

"I should think he would have told the bank to communicate with Mr. Phillipse within a month or so of failing to hear from the supposed Garret," said Suydam thoughtfully. "Mr. Phillipse would still have control, since the bank would not know of Duane's identity with Garret."

"But Phillipse would—would infer it, certainly—and it would be his duty to take over that deposit and use it to discharge the debts of the estate. Like myself, Duane had to contend with the fact that his executor and friend was scrupulously honest."

"That's sweet of you, Hinkle," said Dick dryly. "Let me ask one: Why didn't the message say at once that the money was in the bank? Then he would have had nothing to hide away."

"Because then he would have had to put the bank in charge of proofs of his identity, and he wouldn't trust anybody but you."

"Mr. Hinkle knows you, Dick; and he knows how Garry was, too," said Nell, smiling gratefully at Little Amby.

"And how do the eyes feel, Nell?" asked Doctor Wessel. "No strain—no ache? It happened just as I hoped—very typical. The blindness was psychic. I have a somewhat similar case in my sanitarium now—one where a child with unimpaired vision developed blindness out of sympathy for a blind mother to whom she was very much attached. I hope to restore that child's sight by hypnosis. It is a more extreme case—not complicated, as here, by shock and possible paralysis. Nell's case is not unique, though it is very fascinating. Where an organic derangement is caused by mental shock, resulting in physical vagaries, it is always possible to snap the patient out of the induced condition by reproducing the environment and giving the mind a chance to pick up at the same point."

"How did you come to discover that hidden closet?" asked Suydam.

"Here is a plan of the house that I dug up on my first visit here," said Little Amby with pardonable consequence. "You can learn as much by looking at this, if you know what to look for, as by tearing down the four walls of the study. You see that there used to be a hall going through the top floor to the two servants' rooms that Duane made into a study. That hall was closed up later and two clothes closets made from it, one facing the master's rooms on the top floor, and the other facing the servants' rooms—back to back. It was considered more elegant to segregate the servants. But when Duane bought the place and didn't need so many servants' rooms, he threw those two into one for a study. But he didn't need that clothes closet in his study, and he built his bookcases flush across it."

"Mrs. Duane probably learned of the hidden closet from him. When she wanted a secret place about the house for her own purposes, it occurred to her to use that blind closet. I suppose they broke into it from the linen closet during one of the occasions when Duane was at Lakewood with the rest of the household. Being the housekeeper, Mrs. Duane could guard the secret. But a person

in that closet was right behind the back of the bookcase. To remove a section and keep Duane under observation was simple."

"Ah, that was where the lights were switched off from that night when Scissors was killed!"

"Precisely. The old switch was still in the wall of the closet. I can imagine that Zittel, resolved to kill Duane and to counterfeit his suicide, pushed a book from the shelf to the floor; and Duane got up to restore it, was shot, and the pistol—his own—was tossed into the study. As to Scissors, he was standing with his back to the bookcase; a tap on the shoulder would have caused him to snap around. He was shot, and out went the lights. Phillipse tells me that Mrs. Duane had opened the window directly opposite the bookcase; my idea of that is that in case a shot went wild——"

"Oh, no," pleaded Nell, breaking into tears. "Don't say that about her. She wasn't as bad as that. She was not like that terrible man. But don't talk any more about it. It's all too horrible."

That Saturday morning Dick went with Little Amby to the Mauritius Mortgage & Trust Company to present the claim. As the lawyer had anticipated, the bank officials were readily amenable and required only the protection of a formal

order of court directing them to pay over the money on deposit to the executors.

"That gives Miss Duane a very nice thing," said Little Amby as they left the bank. "She is the sole heir. I guess you need expect no contest from possible heirs of Mrs. Duane."

"Since she had no children and no father and mother, who would be entitled to her property ordinarily?"

"Phillipse, don't snap such questions at me. I'm not so poor that I have to carry the law in my head. I've got books! However, Miss Duane need not fret about relatives of her late sister-in-law coming in to get her property; I'll take care of that. They'll never see a red cent of it. The whole thing belongs to Miss Duane, and I congratulate her. And you, too, I dare say, Phillipse, eh?"

"You may congratulate me on my engagement to Miss Duane, but not on marrying so much money. No, Hinkle, we went over that together and we've decided we don't want any part of the money that was Florence Duane's. We propose to give that money to charity."

Little Amby glanced aside at him. "Have you a worthy object picked out? Phillipse, there's an old Latin phrase that I picked up when I was learning the language—*Pecunia non olet*—which

means that there is no tainted money. That's one of my principles. Don't forget it, will you?"

"Doctor Wessel and I had a talk about you, and since you find no taint on the money, you'll be paid out of that. We propose to pay you twenty-five thousand dollars."

"On account?" grumbled Little Amby, insatiably greedy. "Well, I'll take it this time, Philipse, but I don't want it to set a precedent."

Dick left the lawyer and went to the apartment of Wong Get on Riverside Drive. He returned the sandalwood fan to its owner, told him how it had been of service and thanked him for its use.

"And the guilty wife was shot dead, Mr. Philipse?"

"Shot dead."

"How fortunate. But it has indeed been a fortunate day. I have just heard that the gambler of Doyers Street who listens at doors and sells information to robbers has met with a happy accident."

"Huey Gow? What happened to him?"

"He is dead. He was killed, in fact, but since he was a man without enemies, I say it was an accident."

"I can't say that the news afflicts me greatly.

Mr. Wong, I am a collector of fans, I have quite a few that I would be delighted to have you look over sometime at your leisure. Pardon me for asking, if I offend you, but can that sandalwood fan be bought?"

"And how much would you pay for it, Mr. Phillipse?"

"I'll give you two thousand dollars for it. I'd like to have it, apart from its intrinsic value."

"And would you not give three?"

"That's pretty high, Mr. Wong. But still—you're offering to sell it for that?"

"I do not say so. I think not. Come, I shall name you a price. I must know that you value this fan, for it is very rare. If you will say you will give me five thousand dollars for it, you shall have it."

Dick hesitated, gulped, and said, "I'll do it. Hang it, I want that fan! I'll give you five thousand dollars for it—and when I came here I was determined to stop at two."

Wong Get's eyes shone approvingly; the wide smile on his small round face made him look even more doll-like.

"You like this thing because it is so old, so enduring. In the East we like better what is passing—the color of clouds, the flash of the swallow's wing. We are content to pass. You shall have

the fan, but not for money. For something more precious, Mr. Phillipse. Will you give me for it —a flower from your bride's bouquet?"

He placed the sandalwood fan in Dick's hands.

THE END





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